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A R T H U R C O N W A Y;

OR,

SCENES IN THE TROPICS.

BY CAPTAIN MILMAN,

LATE H. M. 33RD REGIMENT.

AUTHOR OF "THE WAY-SIDE CROSS," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE following Work is given to the world under melancholy circumstances. The Author, who appeared to have commenced a promising literary career, by the production of "The Wayside Cross," in Mr. Murray's Colonial Library, was taken from the world suddenly by a fatal accident on December 21st, 1850.

944.22, May 30, 1856, Blackwell 11.30

In "Arthur Conway," which, at the time of his death, was in the publisher's hands, he had embodied the recollections of scenery and character in our tropical colonies, laid up by an accurate memory during a year's residence with his regiment in Dominica and other of the West Indian Islands. His companions have

vouched for the truthfulness of the descriptions which he has given us, and as his former work was esteemed by the best judges a faithful and lively portraiture of Andalusia and Spanish life, it is thought that the present Book will give an equally exact and vivid picture of Life in the Tropics, so much less known and so little understood in Europe.

It does not become his relations to express their private feelings, and the blank produced in their circle by his loss. The public, however, will forgive them for this brief notice, as the Author had desired that the accuracy and truthfulness of his representations, might render his works of fiction in some measure useful as well as amusing.

MAY, 1851.

ARTHUR CONWAY.

CHAPTER I.

ROUND a table, in a well-furnished room of one of the most fashionable of the Oxford Colleges, sat a party of seven or eight young men, who called themselves "The Knights of the Round Table." The cloth had been removed, and the wine was circulating freely. It was the fashion in those days to drink deep. Merriment and hilarity seemed the order of the evening; though outside a terrible storm was raging.

The wind swept in furious gusts down the

High Street, and howled around the buildings mournfully. The rain came down furiously, beating against the windows as if it would drive them in. Although the candles shone brightly, and the fire played cheerily, the gleam of the lightning-flashes flickered before the eyes of the assembled guests, and every now and then the cracking thunder proclaimed with its awful voice the war of the elements. A winter storm is always doubly fearful. But what cared they ?

At the head of the table sat the giver of the feast, a handsome young man, with blue eyes, and curling, light-brown hair. He alone of all the party seemed affected by the storm. He was dressed in mourning, and, although he did the honours of the table courteously, and kept the bottle circulating freely, his manner was nervous and distracted. His figure was slight, but not in the least boyish ; he looked, however, younger than he was, for that day he had come of age.

“Let us drink the health of King Arthur, with three times three!” said one, rising and filling a bumper. “The best rider, the best oar, and the best scholar of his year at Christchurch, and now the owner of Morley Hall, a palace in the Mall, and other lands and mesuages unknown. Hip! hip! huzza!”

“King! who would not be such a king? No Commons to depose him,—no ‘off with his head!’ ”

“Talking of Commons puts me in mind that Lord Powis wants to enclose part of Ackshaw Heath, but the Commons won’t let him.”

“That would be a levelling principle, and would bring peer and peasant to an equality.”

“How so?”

“Don’t you see? In former days the Commons fought for the Barons, but now the Barons fight for the Commons; for the common is a barren which the Baron wishes to enclose in his own pale; once within the same pale, they must be equal.”

“Ha ! ha !”

“You will keep the hounds on, I hope, Arthur, and the stud at Newmarket?” said a rising sportsman.

“What ails your kingly Grace?” said one, who was always quoting and misquoting Shakspeare. “You looked just now as if you would rather ‘talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs, than caper nimbly in a lady’s chamber. ’Tis a rough night, my liege ; but what of that ? Throw sorrow to the dogs ! Care killed the cat ! If you don’t drink, you’ll dwindle, peak and pine. The bottles are all out. What ho ! more wine !’ ”

“‘I go, and it is done,—the bell invites me !’ ” replied Arthur, in the same vein, shaking off his apathy for the moment ; but it was only for the moment, for as soon as the wine was brought, he relapsed into his silent, abstracted mood. He filled his glass mechanically, and drank the contents off ; but it tasted to him like wormwood.

“Fill your glasses, and no heeltaps ! Here’s the health of the future Queen of Morley, whoever she may be, and I can only hope that she will be chaster than Guiever !”

“Arthur is in love already,—only look at him !”

“Yes, with ten thousand a-year.”

“I’ll bet you a guinea he is. Come, Arthur, confess it.”

“By Jove ! what a flush !”

It was now observed by more than one that their host was deadly pale. They were a merry, but not dissipated set, and the wine that they had drunk was just sufficient to quicken their feelings and apprehensions. They whispered together, and one of them, rising, said, kindly :

“This is no night for revelry, Arthur. You look ill, and had better go to bed. Give us a cup of coffee, and we will go.”

“You are very considerate, my dear fellows,” replied Conway. “I do indeed feel strangely

ill. I think it is the thunder that affects me. But it would be the height of inhospitality to turn you out on such a night as this !”

“Not a bit of it. We will adjourn for the nonce, and have it out another time. Sport your oak, and go to bed.”

They were gone.

Still the wind howled, the rain beat, and the storm rattled, and Arthur Conway remained seated where he was, with his head drooping over the table, and resting on his hands, with which he formed a shade over his eyes from the sickly glare of the candles, and the dazzle of the lightning ; but close to his face, lying on the table, was the miniature of a bright-eyed girl. The upper part of her face was beautiful, and singularly soft, but about the mouth and curling upper lip there was an expression of pride, and even harshness, so faithfully portrayed, that it marred the otherwise lovely picture in any eyes but his.

“Why art thou cast down, oh, my soul?

and why art thou so disquieted in me?" murmured the young man, using the words of the Psalmist, so peculiarly adapted to his frame of mind at that moment. "How can I account for this fearful despondency? Is it your image, sweet Edith, that causes it? Oh! how I love thee! But is that love returned? Why do I doubt? Fool that I was, not to make sure of her when I was plain Arthur Conway, with a few thousands. Then I had no doubt of her sincerity; but now, might not men say, even if she consented to become mine, that she loved not Arthur Conway, but the owner of Morley. Oh, these doubts! how they unmake a man! But will this account for the miserable depression I now feel? It ought not, for I still hope. Is it not, rather, some harbinger of evil dimly foreshadowing itself on my mind, sent by heaven, lest I should become too elated with my prosperity? Whatever it is, I am very miserable!"

A tear dropped on the miniature, and he

stooped to kiss it away ; but, before he could do it, a flash passed between his face and Edith's. He paused, then came the crash of the thunder-clap, close—so close that it made the glasses ring again, and the whole building seemed to quiver from the shock.

“What !” cried he, starting up. “Do the very elements warn me against thee !—does the lightning interfere, and the thunder say thou shalt not be mine !——What nonsense I am talking !” murmured poor Arthur, as he sank down again into his chair. “Surely my brain must be a little disordered to-night, or has the wine had an unusual effect upon me ? I'll go to bed, and try and sleep it off. Dear Edith ! did I think ill of thee ?—forgive me !”

The young man quietly extinguished the candles, and retired to rest ; and, as his senses became calmer, the storm gradually died away ; and, when he fell asleep, the stars peeped out in the deep purple sky.

* * * * *

Sir William Deverell, the late owner of Morley Hall, was a very eccentric character. Possessed of enormous wealth, he squandered much of it away, not on himself, but on his dependents, who feathered their nests comfortably at his expense—for he never looked into his accounts. He kept a pack of fox-hounds, but never hunted; he had a stud of running horses at Newmarket, which he never saw, and which of course rarely won; a house in London, which he kept up, but never used, excepting on one memorable occasion, when he slept in it; a train of sleek men-servants, grooms, and hangers-on, who did what they pleased, which was very little, and a French cook, who did still less, for, to Sir William, a chop and a glass of cider was a feast. Consistent in inconsistencies, he was a professed Republican, but a bitter aristocrat; a philanthropist, but he contrived to quarrel with most of his neighbours. He disclaimed against women, but it was whispered that this was because he had been rejected by

more than one, and that he was very fond of the fair sex. He raved against Popery, and upheld Protestantism, but had never been known to enter a church. He was a devoted admirer of Lord George Gordon, and it was said that he had assisted that eccentric nobleman with large sums of money, though he would not throw a sixpence to a starving wretch.

The only night he had slept in his house in the Mall—perhaps to disarm suspicion—was that on which Newgate was burned down. No one could guess who would succeed to his enormous wealth and estates, which were not entailed. The immediate heir, or, rather, next of kin, was Sir Walter Conway, the head of that family, and uncle to the young Oxonian whom we have already introduced to our readers; but it was supposed that he had on several occasions offended Sir William by his votes in Parliament.

Sir William Deverell died suddenly, whilst enjoying his favourite pursuit of fishing; but his age already had exceeded that allotted to

man. Great was the excitement on opening his will, which was found on a scrap of dirty paper in his fishing-case, though duly signed, sealed, and witnessed; and great was the astonishment of all, and the consternation of many who had reckoned on being noticed in the will, when it was found that he had left the whole of his estates, real and personal, to his second cousin, Arthur Conway, and to his heirs for ever. It was dated on the 5th of November, 1772; just twenty-two years before the opening of this tale. There was but one mode of accounting for this unexpected disposal of his vast property, which was, that Mr. Conway had once said, in conversation with Sir William Deverell, "that he thought, as long as the Roman Catholic religion should hold its ground, so long would there be despotism in Europe."

The will was very short.

"I leave and bequeath the whole of my estates, real and personal, to my second cousin,

Arthur William Conway, and to his heirs, male, for ever, provided he does not marry a Roman Catholic woman.

“ Signed,

“ WILLIAM DEVERELL,

“ Witnessed by

“ John Anguish, apothecary,

“ Tom Ellam, gamekeeper.”

Mr. Conway had now been dead several years, but the will had never been revoked or altered, and young Arthur de la Motte Conway was astonished and delighted one day at receiving from his attorney, a letter enclosing a copy of the will, and requesting his presence at Morley Hall to attend the funeral. Arthur hated funerals and would not go, but left everything to his attorney.

* * * * *

Sir Walter Conway was the owner of a family estate in the same county, and not very

far from Morley Hall. He had been wild and dissipated in his youth, and had raised large sums at an exorbitant rate of interest from those harpies who are always ready to pounce upon any young man of certain property. He was, in consequence, in after life, much embarrassed, and every acre of the Grange, as his estate was called, was mortgaged to its full extent. He had made an improvident marriage.

Lady Conway was an aristocratic beauty of the order insipid, genus doll, yet she had been a standing toast at the clubs. A smile from her rosy lips had been to more than one unsophisticated youth, as an emanation from a superior being, and to catch a favouring glance from her soft blue eye, was to encounter a ray from Paradise too dazzling for the heart to sustain without a wound. To the surprise of all, the dashing, hard-drinking, hard-riding Baronet wooed and won her. Her sole taste was in dress and equipage, and a coach with

four-in-hand was to her a *sine quâ non*. As her parents who, though noble, were poor, could not afford to keep one for her use, she could not refuse an offer from one apparently rich, certainly handsome, and in her own set. She soon helped him in wasting his estate, and infatuated as he was with her beauty, it was not long before he discovered that there was nothing beneath the surface but extravagance and frivolity, and bitterly did he repent his choice. Although extremely selfish, Sir Walter was by no means a harsh man by nature, but finding that his favourite pursuits of hunting and racing would be incompatible with his wife's extravagant habits, he began to accuse her of them, and threatened to reduce her establishment. She, in turn, recriminated, and neither would give in. But before long, his hounds and horses and her coach and four were sold to appease some of the most pressing creditors, and they lived very unhappily together.

Two daughters were the issue of this ill-assorted marriage. The eldest, Edith, now about twenty-one years of age, strongly resembled both her parents in feature and character. Her auburn hair and blue eyes were her mother's, but the latter sparkled with brighter lustre; her slightly aquiline nose and determined haughty but ruby-lipped mouth were her father's. Like the one, she was extremely fond of dress, and usually indolent; but, on the other hand, she could shake it off when she chose to please and become lively and agreeable. She was a bold, graceful, and fearless horsewoman, and delighted to display her fine figure in her well-fitting riding-habit and plumed hat in the hunting-field, to the intense admiration of the neighbouring squires. She took long rides, and flirted with her young cousin Arthur whenever he spent the vacations, which he usually did, at the Grange, and as Sir Walter and his brother had always been on good terms—for there had as yet been

no cause of rivalry or jealousy between them—Mrs. Conway, who was an invalid, and required warm country air, was always welcome, and was generally asked to meet her son at the Grange. She, poor thing, could not see the danger her son was incurring from his constant, unwatched intercourse with his handsome cousin. The mother's warning might have interposed before it was yet too late, but it was never spoken, and Arthur, who had passed the last long vacation basking in the smiles of the lovely Edith, had returned to Oxford, hopelessly and irremediably in love.

Her father either did not, or would not notice this familiar intercourse, or, perhaps, he thought it but natural between two cousins, and her mother was too wrapt up in self,—too much engaged with keeping her declining beauty alive to perceive it at all; so no one interfered. Yet there were two persons at the Grange who not only saw that poor Arthur was head and ears in love with his dangerous cousin, but felt for him

deeply in their different ways. Louisa, who had just emerged from the chrysalis state of the girl to that of the woman, resplendent in beauty and purity, was like her mother in face and figure, but, oh, how different in her mind ! Exquisitely soft and feminine in her person, her intellect was strong and vigorous. She had been neglected and put aside—eclipsed—by her more showy and dashing sister ; but as if she thrived best in the shade, she grew from the retiring, awkward child, into the fascinating, intellectual woman. There was another thing, too, that seemed, as it were, to separate her from the rest of her family, which was, that she was deeply imbued with a true feeling of religion. The rest might profess it outwardly, but she alone had that sincere and inward yearning of the heart which, searching after the truth, finds it through faith, and keeps it with holy fervour to the end, which is eternal happiness.

Louisa had early discovered the growing attachment of the poor boy to his cousin, and

pitied him sincerely ; for she knew, although Edith had never made her a confidant, that the love was not reciprocal, and that her sister regarded it as a mere boyish caprice—a whim of a season, which the first contact with the world would remove. Once—and once only—had she ventured to remonstrate with Edith on the subject, but she had met with such a rebuff, that she felt it was useless to say more. Her sister had said :

“ How do you know that I do not love Arthur ? Neither my father nor mother object to our seeing so much of each other, then why should you ? Your interference would make me suppose, if you were not so young, that you were already jealous that his attentions are not more equally divided.”

Upon this, Louisa had blushed deeply, and burst into tears. Edith kissed her, and seemed very unhappy at having disturbed her ; but a reconciliation was soon effected, and the cousins took a long ride that evening together.

The second person who had watched poor Arthur's love from its first budding, was Edith's own maid, the daughter of a respectable tenant on the Deverell estate, a black-eyed, black-haired, lively Devonshire lass. Pretty Dinah Derrick had her admirers too, and it was currently believed that she was engaged to a young man, well to do in the world, who had already risen from the humble post of cabin-boy, to be master of a large vessel, that traded from Plymouth—which was not very remote from Morley—to the West Indies. She it was who placed on her mistress' toilet-table the fresh flowers, gathered in the morning before the dew was off, by the love-sick Oxonian. Through her were sent those pretty messages and inquiries which mark devoted attention, and to which she received the replies. By these she was able, in some degree, to judge of the feelings on both sides.

This constant going between had its effect.

She saw plainly that poor Arthur's love was hopeless, and she pitied him, and, at the same time, thought that her mistress was wanting in discrimination not to love such a handsome, fascinating young man. To her, he appeared a superior being, so unlike the rough, unpolished squires, so unlike her own coarse-spoken lover. His skin was so smooth, his hands so small and white, and he spoke so softly ; and then he was so good-looking, and sat his horse like a prince. Poor Dinah !

* * * * *

During the summer, the whole party above-mentioned, with the exception of Mr. Conway, who, as has already been stated, had been dead some years, were assembled at the Grange. Although Sir Walter Conway did not quite agree in politics with the owner of Morley, nor, indeed, in anything else, yet he was very fond of the place, for he was passionately addicted to sporting. The hounds, the stud, the splendid

covers, the leaping trout-stream, formed an irresistible nucleus of attraction to the sporting Baronet ; and as their proper owner never interfered in their management, his servants, no doubt regarding Sir Walter as his successor, were always anxious to please him ; and horses, hounds, huntsmen, and keepers, were all at his command, as if he had been really their master. A vague hope inspired him at times that he should one day become so, although he felt that the eccentric character of Sir William rendered that hope very uncertain ; yet he was so accustomed to Morley, that it seemed to him almost impossible that it should pass into other hands than his.

Young Arthur, too, was an especial favourite with the keepers, particularly with old Tom Ellam, the head of that establishment, and his son Tom, the younger.

He rode well, shot well, and could throw a fly—then an art known to few,—was prodigal

of his person, and liberal with his purse, and, above all things, always spoke civilly and kindly to them. But old Sir William took very little notice of him, and always treated him as a mere boy. Tom Ellam shook his head knowingly at this, when it was done in his presence, and would wink, and chuckle, and smile, as if he knew all about it. He had initiated Arthur into the mysteries of trout-fishing, and this summer he was dreadfully vexed when the Mayfly was running, and the stream alive with fish, to find his young master, as he called him, when he came over to Morley, always riding or walking with his cousin Edith, unconscious of the fact that the old keeper was watching him anxiously, and with much disapprobation. Thus briefly have we endeavoured to sketch the position of the Conway family, a short time previous to the death of the eccentric Sir William Deverell.

That event created much heart-burning, much misery, crime, sorrow, and repentance, when his

will, like Pandora's box, was opened, and spread them around.

But before we enter into the career of crime, it is necessary to relate the history of Arthur's parents, which was singularly romantic.

CHAPTER II.

IN the summer of the year 177—, a great sensation was created amongst certain circles in Paris, by the elopement or sudden disappearance of a young lady of noble family. Many rumours of course arose, and many stories were soon in circulation, some with and some without foundation. Some said that her body lay at the Morgue, but that her family was ashamed to own it; others, that she had run away with a young officer of the Garde Royale, who had disappeared about the

same time; and again, that she had been forcibly abducted, and then murdered, by a certain fashionable Marquis, whom her family had desired for her husband, but to whom it was known the young lady herself had an unconquerable aversion. It was even hinted that the King himself had some hand in her sudden and mysterious disappearance; but few, very few, knew the real cause of her flight, or anything of her subsequent history. We are, however, able to give nearly the whole of it, by collating and arranging the events of her life, which are scattered somewhat confusedly over the original manuscript, as her son became acquainted with them.

Eugenie de la Motte, nobly born, and highly connected, might have formed an alliance with the greatest in the land, had she not been of a singularly unambitious and reserved disposition. She mixed very little in the gaieties of the gayest city in the world, and this was generally attributed to shyness, to awkwardness, to any-

thing but the truth. She liked them not ; she saw the hollowness, the frivolity and licentiousness of the society in which she must have moved, had she quitted her retirement. But her own words will show more clearly the motives of her conduct.

A letter is extant, written in a small female hand, in the French language, and signed Eugenie, which no doubt is a copy of one left behind her for the purpose of explaining why she left her parents, her home, her country, to follow the fortunes of one whom she loved sufficiently to forget in his arms what she had lost.

That she loved him we can scarcely doubt, but that she did not mourn his melancholy fate long, subsequent events proved. The following is an extract from the letter :

“I fly from persecution. May the great God grant me mercy and forgiveness if I am doing wrong ; but from you I ask neither.

You gave me the alternative of wedding the Marquis de Charolles—a *roué* and a gambler—or entering a convent; you cannot plead ignorance that the first was loathsome to me. Now learn, if you are not already aware of it, that the alternative you proposed would be even more hateful; for in one case, it would be but the gradual destruction of the body; but in the other, there would be a moral, an everlasting death, an infamy. I am not of your religion, and I will not lead a living death. My mother was a Huguenot, and I am one. O father, father! you know it, and yet you can sacrifice your daughter before the shrine of the monster riches, or force her to lead a death in life. Dreamedst thou that I had eyes, and could not see? There is a Book forbidden to us by persecution, that clears the understanding. I read it, but thou dost not; this then is the secret. ‘Saul! Saul! why persecutest thou me?’ Nay, father, it was thy pernicious doctrines, and thy evil counsellors, who wrought upon thee to

persecute thy poor child. Forgive thy Eugenie ; but no, no, they will not allow thee even that consolation, thou wilt curse her to thy dying day. I know them, I fear them, and I have fled. They will seek me, but they shall not find me. There is one even mightier than they, and He will comfort the afflicted, not between the dreary walls of the living sepulchre, but in the glorious and open face of beaming nature, where the knee can bow, and the heart lift up its voice in adoration, not to painted images, but to Him who sits upon the throne. Why didst thou press me, O my father, thus cruelly? When I knelt at thy feet, and told thee the workings of my heart ; when I wept and prayed, and told thee that I could not love the dark, fearful man, with the glittering black eyes ; why, oh, why didst thou spurn me from thee? ‘This man or a convent!’ The words scorched me. ‘Thou shalt wed him or Jesus!’ Oh, horrible, impious blasphemy ! Am I thy daughter? My

eyes are dry, I cannot weep ! no tear will drop to blot this page ; behold, I am calm. God has given the weak one strength—the strength of the martyr. Yet, think not that I seek death. That were a triumph to my persecutors. No, I fly to the world. I live, because it is a mortal sin to die before the hand of God is stretched forth to call me from the world. I may never be happy again ; but I will not die a moral death. Father, farewell. I will not ask you to bless me ; but oh, do not curse your daughter !

“ EUGENIE.”

There is a great incoherence and much seeming inconsistency in this letter ; and it may be observed, that there is not a hint of any earthly love beyond that of breathing freely in the world, untrammelled by the miseries of a conventual life, or the stronger and more hateful existence of a bright being bound for life to one hated, scorned, and loathed. Never-

theless, the following scene, which occurred about four years after the mysterious disappearance of the fair Eugenie from Paris, will show that love had something to do with it.

Mr. Conway was travelling on horseback, with one armed attendant, through Piedmont and the south of France. One lovely summer afternoon he had quitted Nice, on his way to Marseilles, riding leisurely, and wandering about through by-ways and bridle-roads, in search of the picturesque.

As he was emerging from a thick grove of chestnut-trees, he heard a cry and a woman's scream. Setting spurs to his horse, he rode rapidly to the place from whence the sound seemed to proceed. In an open glade of the forest, lying prostrate on the smooth turf, was the body of a young man, with raven-black hair, the dark blood welling from a wound in his side. A fair girl, with bright golden tresses, was leaning over him, striving frantically to stop the gushing life-blood ; and then springing

wildly up, and screaming, with outstretched hands, "My child! my child!"

About a hundred yards off, a cavalier on horseback, with a bright glittering eye and scowling brow, held up a child, crying fearfully, towards the frantic mother, as if for her to come and fetch it, in triumph and malicious mockery; but when he saw the two horsemen approaching, he turned his horse round, and rode off at full speed, and in a moment was lost to view in the depths of the forest.

Mr. Conway threw himself off his horse to assist the lady in her fearful task; but she, pointing in the direction of the retreating horseman, cried, in heart-rending accents: "My boy, my darling boy—oh, save him from the cruel Marquis!"

The Englishman quickly remounted, and, followed by his attendant, pursued the fugitive, but in vain; the soft turf betrayed not the sound of the horse's hoofs, and the dense forest hid him from their view. Mr. Conway soon

saw the utter hopelessness of attempting the capture of the fugitive, and retraced his steps towards the bereaved mother.

Even in that one short moment he had been struck with the singular loveliness of that fair young girl.

As he returned, she ran towards him, eagerly crying: "My boy! where is my boy?"

"Alas! I have not been able to trace them; I lost them in the depths of the forest. But, my dear lady, let me seek for some assistance."

And Mr. Conway dismounted, and raised the prostrate figure from the ground. There was no life in it. He laid it gently down again on the turf.

The lady stood by, wringing her hands in anguish.

"Allow me, at least, Madame, to send my follower to your house for help," said the Englishman.

"Oh, no, no," she said, sobbing, as if her heart would break; "I shall be discovered.

Oh, *mon Dieu* ! I am discovered. The Marquis, the Marquis ! he with the glittering eyes. They will seek me out ; and he, my husband, my protector, is dead, dead ; and my child, my child, the Marquis has him ; he will kill him as he killed his father ; and my father will come, and the Marquis. Oh, save me, save me ! Who are you ?” she continued, grasping Mr. Conway by the arm, and looking wistfully into his face ; “ are you not an Englishman ? They would shut me up for life in a convent, and I am a Huguenot. I read the Bible, like you. Will you not help a poor persecuted Huguenot ? Yes, yes, I know you will—I read it in your eyes. Let us fly.”

“ Whither ?”

“ To Rome—to my uncle, the Cardinal ; he can protect me.”

* * * *

The palace of the Cardinal Pietra at Rome ! A dark wainscotted room, hung with crimson drapery ; a few quaint carved oak chairs, and

an ebony table, inlaid with gold and ivory ; the floor of polished walnut, and in one corner a *prie Dieu*. In this chamber are two figures, forming a strange contrast. One is a tall, dark man, in a Cardinal's dress, with peculiarly marked eyebrows, and a bright expressive eye, not dimmed with age, though he is nearly seventy ; the other a beautiful girl, with bright, golden hair, and soft blue eyes.

“ Daughter, I have sent for thee to tell thee unpleasant tidings. The Marquis is in Rome ; he seeks thee, my poor child.”

Eugenie threw herself on her knees before him, and, clasping her hands together, besought him, in heart-rending accents, to save her—to protect her from what she feared worse than death. The dark-browed Cardinal raised his weeping niece, and folding her to his breast, kissed her on the forehead, whilst a tear trickled unbidden down his manly cheek.

“ Your mother, Eugenie, was dear to me, and you—her image—have twined yourself

round my heart. How can I part with thee, my child? Yet they will discover thee—they will tear thee from me, and I have now no power, for his Holiness, the Pope, is in the hands of the Cardinal Espinoza, my bitterest enemy.”

“O, father, will it not be very dreadful?” she said, with great simplicity, in a voice half sad, half tender, “for I love.”

The Cardinal looked at her with surprise.

“And whom do you love, my daughter?”

Eugenie cast down her eyes, and blushed deeply, but replied, calmly, that it was the noble young Englishman who had saved her and conducted her so honourably to Rome, whom she now loved with her whole heart.

The Cardinal listened gravely and attentively, but shook his head reproachfully, as he said :

“But he is a heretic, my daughter, and no marriages can take place at Rome where both are not Catholics.”

“I would sooner die, my father, and I will die, rather than marry the Marquis, or live a living death, which is the alternative,” she said, in a voice so calm, so still, so low, and yet so resolute, that it startled the dark-browed, stern-looking man.

She continued, as if speaking to herself:

“A convent! What is it? A living sepulchre. Once I said that I would not die—that it would be a triumph to my enemies; but now—ah, me! I love as I never loved—I knew not what love was. Can I commit such an awful perjury?”

But we will not—in fact, we must not—dwell on these scenes, for we have a long tale to tell.

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About a week after this interview, there was a marriage at the British Embassy at Naples. The persons were the same as the two who fled from Fregys, but the names were changed.

They lived together for some time in perfect retirement, on the Chiaga.

One day, a present arrived from Rome. It was a beautifully-chased crucifix, with two little, but lovely pictures on panels behind the figure. The likeness of each individual figure in these pictures, to some who were still alive, and some who were dead, was very striking and remarkable: in fact, they were real portraits. A short note accompanied this beautiful present.

No one knew how it had been transmitted from Rome. It was left at the door by a man in the dress of a peasant, somewhere about daybreak. The note concluded with a warning:

“They are on your track. Beware!”

That morning Mr. Conway narrowly escaped assassination. He was dogged by bravos, and would have been stabbed but for the unlooked-for interference of two men dressed as *contadinos*.

Next morning, they quitted Naples for ever.

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Nine or ten months after this, there was a terrible storm on the east coast of England. A vessel coming from Hamburgh was driven on that frightful shore near Yarmouth. Before she was swallowed up in those awful sands, a yawl reached her.

Two passengers—a lady and gentleman—were saved, and one package, which the gentleman appeared to value more than himself, for he risked his life for it.

They were landed near Lowestoft. There the lady was taken dreadfully ill, and was confined prematurely. To the surprise of all, however, both the child and the lady survived, but the shock rendered her an invalid for the rest of her life.

Lowestoft was then an obscure fishing village, where a few herrings were salted,

not a watering-place as it is now; there was, therefore, very little gossip, and nothing was known about the lady and gentleman, but that their name was Conway.

CHAPTER III.

THE storm which had burst over Oxford in its fury did not reach London; yet the wind murmured and sighed mournfully amongst the leafless trees in St. James's Park. There were faint flashes gleaming across the dark sky, and occasionally a low, rumbling sound came borne on the heavy air. Large drops of rain fell at intervals, and the whole atmosphere seemed loaded and oppressed with a palpable darkness.

A solitary individual was crossing the Park

from the Westminster side. He walked with a slow, but firm step, and his whole appearance indicated strength and resolution. He was about forty-five years of age, and bore in his mien something that denoted high birth, although he was now clad in a rusty suit of black, and carried a bundle under his arm.

“There will be a fearful storm to-night,” muttered the man, in the French language. “The darkness is frightful; but it is welcome, for it hides my poverty. Curses on those howling revolutionary dogs who hunted me out of Paris—but I forget,” added he, bitterly, “I am a priest, and we are taught to despise riches, and to mortify the flesh; but have we not our feelings and our passions like other men? only we must hide them from the world as if we were better than others. What can this Englishman want with the persecuted French priest? Has he some one to confess? Is he one of us? Well, well, I care not, for he offers me money—besides, is it not for

the greater glory of God? and does not the end sanctify the means? but can I attain that end without money? shall I scruple then to obtain it?—this is the reasoning, and it suits me. Will that fool Chaumelin meet me as I appointed, with the cross, and the vase, and the brush—those tools which we use, and which such fools as he put trust in. And I—what do I believe in?—nothing.”

The priest, for such he was, awful as his thoughts were, crossed the Park, and stopped before a large house in the Mall. Lights were moving to and fro, gleaming from the windows. The street-door was open, and there seemed some unusual bustle. One carriage with post-horses was just starting from the door, and another had that moment driven up.

“Is this life or death? Has one more wretch come into the world to swell the vast tide that is ever hurrying on to annihilation, or is it only one more added to the

heap of corruption and rottenness that forms the earth? whichever it is, I will profit by it." Thus muttered the Priest, as a dapper little man jumped nimbly out of the carriage, and entered the house. "Does Sir Walter Conway live here?" the priest inquired of a man-servant, who was standing at the door.

"Yees, he does," answered the footman, in that supercilious tone, which that description of animal knows so well how to assume, letting his gooseberry eyes wander over the priest's shabby dress, "what may you please to want?"

"I want your master, fellow," replied the Frenchman, with a voice of peculiar command, and an air that spoke authority.

"I don't think he will see you," said the servant, lowering his tone; "mistress has had a fit, and is very ill; but I'll see: what name shall I say?"

"Say that the man he sought is come."

"Walk into the hall, and I'll go and tell

him," said the lacquey, as he lounged lazily away.

"I had nearly forgotten myself," muttered the priest. "Name—have I a name? Curse on this poverty, see how the veriest cur of a lacquey despises me! But I must have a name; let it be, then, what the fool Chaumelin calls me—the Abbé."

The servant soon returned, and ushered the Priest into the presence of Sir Walter Conway. The Baronet was sitting by a blazing fire, with a table before him, on which were several decanters of wine and a plate of olives—for he was a true *bon vivant*, and repudiated the delicacies of a dessert as injurious to his port or burgundy. The Abbé was evidently not an unexpected guest, for a plate and glasses were placed opposite to the Baronet, and a cosy arm-chair wheeled up near the fire, within reach of them.

"Peace be unto this house," said the Priest, crossing himself as he entered the room.

“The Abbé Latouche, I presume? Will you excuse my not rising?” said the Baronet. “Take a seat, Sir, I beg, and help yourself, if your Order does not forbid it. The wine is old, and the olives new.”

The Priest smiled scornfully, as he seated himself in the arm-chair, and pouring out a glass of wine, he said:

“It is my poverty, and not my Order that forbids it, Sir Walter; burgundy and I have met but rarely lately.”

There was something in these few words, and in the manner in which they were spoken, which told the Baronet that this was the man he wanted—bold, unscrupulous, and poor—one who would gratify his senses and passions if his means would allow him. He had already hinted at his poverty, and showed that he was partial to the good things of this life, and this in one brief sentence.

Just the man for him. Yet he determined to proceed cautiously at first. But, flushed with

wine and new to the practice of dissimulation, the Baronet was no match for the Abbé, if the latter had been inclined to play a part.

As they sat opposite to one another before the cheerful fire, helping themselves at intervals liberally to the sparkling burgundy, the following conversation passed between them; the Baronet being the first to speak.

“ You must be aware, Monsieur l’Abbé, that I did not send for you on my own account. I think I mentioned in my note to you that there is a lady connected with me by marriage, who follows the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church ?”

“ You did, Sir Walter ; and I was much surprised at it.”

“ Why so ?”

“ Simply because I thought it strange that there should be a Catholic in a family so essentially Protestant. May I ask the lady’s name ?”

“ There is no need now of making a mystery

of it," thought the Baronet, "I may as well tell him. It is my late brother's widow; she is of your nation, and there was something romantic in her history, I believe; but as I do not know the facts, I cannot tell it."

"If you did, Sir Walter, I should not wish to hear it; reminiscences of the past are bitter things sometimes. But are you sure that she is of our holy religion? Has she seen any priest? Has she had a confessor? Such are yet to be found, for though hunted and persecuted, we still exist."

"No, I think not," answered the Baronet, venturing a terrible lie; "my sister-in-law is very timid, and has been of late years a dreadful invalid; but a few days ago she expressed a wish to see a minister of your creed: perhaps she is anxious to confess."

"Nay, that can hardly be under the circumstances, for I heard that the lady was already *in extremis*: if so, I have come too late; and

indeed, I ought to have convincing proof that she is not a heretic before I administer the rites of the Holy Church."

"She has not professed it openly, it is true, for the sake of her son, who is at Oxford; but there can be no doubt of the fact. She has a small oratory, and prays daily, kneeling before a crucifix. No Protestant does that."

"Even granting that, it is now too late for her to receive the extreme unction, that last holy rite of our Church, provided what your servants said is true; they told me their mistress was actually in the death agony."

"The babbling fools," thought the Baronet. "If this man is sincere there is no hope for me. I must be more open with him." He filled a bumper of burgundy, and drank it off.

"I will confess to you, Monsieur l'Abbé, that I wish most particularly that this lady should receive the last rites of your Church before she dies."

"It is impossible, Sir Walter, unless she recovers sufficiently to be sensible of their performance."

"I will give you five hundred reasons to make it possible, and five hundred more if it can be done before witnesses. Her own maid is a Catholic."

There was a pause, and they looked at one another steadily.

"My violet robe is there; and the consecrated oil is round my neck: and my assistant Chaumelin will be here presently," said the Abbé, slowly and distinctly.

"You consent then, my dear Abbé," exclaimed the Baronet, joyfully.

"My zeal for our Holy Church is so great," said the priest, sneeringly, "that if the lady is not dead already I will administer the last sacrament. But you must give me your reasons before I do it."

"I will write you them in gold, Monsieur

l'Abbé, or what is worth as much. Will you accept this trifle?"

"For the use of the poor, and the greater glory of God," said the priest, rising and taking a slip of paper which the Baronet handed to him across the table. It was a note for five hundred pounds.

"Will that remove your scruples? if so we will speak more openly, if you please."

"Your arguments are liberal, and your reasons convincing. I am now at your service."

"Are you really what you pretend to be—a priest of the Catholic religion?"

"That question comes rather late, Sir Walter; but to my sorrow I am a priest, and a poor priest, too, but I was not always so. Strange as it may sound to you, I have sat in high places, been caressed by haughty dames, and kissed the hand of royalty. I was proud then, but my pride was destined to be lowered. First came humiliation, then poverty; faugh! those

yelping *sans culottes*, how they howled and snarled till they had hunted us out of Paris."

"Cannot you enjoy yourself in London as well?"

"It might be tolerable, had I the means to make it so; but to live in this desert without money is hard to bear."

"You shall never want it, my dear Sir, if I succeed through your means; that trifle is but an earnest of what I will do when my end is accomplished."

At this moment a servant opened the door, and announced one of the King's physicians. He appeared a little surprised at seeing a shabbily dressed man sitting familiarly at the same table with the fashionable Baronet, but he was a man of courtly manners, and when Sir Walter introduced the Abbé as an old friend whom he had not seen for years, he returned the priest's haughty bow graciously, and offered his diamond-studded snuff-box. The Baronet

pressed him to be seated, but he declined, and remained standing by the table.

“How is your patient?” said the Baronet.

The physician shook his head, and took a pinch of snuff before he replied, “She is very ill, indeed. It is a stroke of paralysis, and I fear that she cannot recover from it, for her constitution has been broken for years.”

“So much the better,” thought the Baronet. “This will be a sad blow to her only son, poor fellow! I sent for him before you arrived, but I fear he will come too late.”

“He will,” said the physician, solemnly. “There is indeed no hope; Mrs. Conway will die to-night.”

“This is sad, indeed. Has she spoken? has she recovered her senses?”

“She was in a state of coma when I arrived, but before I left there was evidence of a partial return of the senses, and her lips moved. By the bye,” continued the physician, stooping

down and whispering in the Baronet's ear, "I did not know that Mrs. Conway was a Catholic."

Sir Walter looked at him with astonishment, and hardly suppressed an exclamation ; but said quickly, in a low voice, "I have known it for some time?"

"I was, I confess, taken by surprise," resumed the physician, in a hurried whisper, "when standing by her side, I saw her making signs for me to stand back. I turned round, and there was an ivory cross with a Christ crucified on it. She moved her head so as to get a view of it, and was evidently praying to it, for her lips moved, and I think she tried to cross herself. Excuse my rudeness in whispering, but I did not like to say this before a stranger."

The King's physician then took out his watch, looked at it, shook his head, as if he had said too much, bowed, and saying he would

be back in an hour, left them again *tête-à-tête*.

Whilst the whispering was going on, the priest had fallen into deep thought. What could be the Baronet's motive in making his sister-in-law appear a Catholic? that there was some great stake at issue could not for a moment be doubted; for it was not in nature that a Protestant gentleman should give five hundred pounds for the performance of a Roman Catholic ceremony, without some commensurate advantage to accrue from it; and had he even been a sincere member of the priesthood, it was only gathering a stray sheep into their fold at a small sacrifice of conscience. Altogether it seemed an easy way of coining money without much risk or trouble; and as the Baronet had been liberal, he determined to carry it through with the best appearance that he could make under the circumstances; but to do this it would be necessary to call in the assist-

ance of the lady's-maid, who was a Catholic.

What the physician had said startled Sir Walter; it was unhopèd-for and unexpected. Such evidence would weigh more than anything the man he had already paid could do. It was an annoying thought, but he had gone too far to retreat. There was every prospect of success, if his sister-in-law did not recover sufficiently to speak. Her son might arrive by noon on the next day. If, however, what the physician said was correct—and why not?—he would come too late; but, to make assurance doubly sure, he resolved to play the great game—the priest should administer the rites before witnesses. Thus they both came to the same conclusion, and nearly at the same moment.

It was soon settled; and the priest, unrolling his bundle, clothed himself in his violet-coloured robe. The maid, who was in attendance on her dying mistress, was sent for hurriedly, and the

Abbé conversed with her apart for a few minutes. The maid, being a Catholic, was easily convinced that what was to be done was for the good of her mistress's soul, particularly as it never occurred to her that there could be any sinister object in the performance of a holy sacrament. The priest, therefore, having requested that he might be informed when his assistant arrived, ascended with her to the chamber of the dying lady.

Hardened must that man be, who can enter the chamber of the dying, without feeling some emotion, some softening of the heart, some awakening of the small, still voice of conscience !

Go, watch the breath fleeting from the living body, gasp by gasp—the candle of life flickering dimly in its socket, fainter and fainter—the wandering eye fixing at last on vacancy, the calm gliding into death !

Go, watch the maniac ravings, the fierce

strugglings, the clenched hands, the heaving breast, the starting eyeballs, the fierce passion of death, and think that they are the same.

“Death but shuts the life of man,
To open with a wider span,
The gates of immortality.”

It is said that the death of the righteous is peaceful, and that of the wicked like a stormy sea, but experience teaches otherwise—they are both alike.

“I will exhort your mistress to confess, before she receives the last sacrament,” said the priest to the agitated maid, as they entered the chamber; “leave us alone, but remain within call.”

A single wax candle, burning dimly, stood on a small marble table, shedding a faint light on the furniture of the room; but the priest's eyes did not wander.

He approached the bed, and drew back the heavy curtains gently, with a tremulous hand,

and gazed for a few minutes at the pallid countenance of the dying woman.

Her eyes were wide open, and upturned towards heaven, but there had spread already over them a glassy film, and they moved not.

Her lips were closed, and round them flickered a faint, sweet smile, that spoke—

“Of peace and rest, and innocence serene.”

She did not gasp or moan, but lay there like an alabaster figure, still and motionless, and as spotless and pure. Nothing indicated that the breath of life was still in that fair, emaciated frame, but a scarcely perceptible movement of the nostril, so slight, that the priest at first thought that he had come too late, and that she was already dead.

But, as he looked at that pale, seraphic countenance, across which Death was fast spreading his veil of apathy, over his own there came a fierce and sudden change, and he stood

there like one struck by an electric shock. Then he stooped down and gazed at her, as if he would read every feature, and raised with shaking hand a tress of the long hair which lay loosely and carelessly on the pillow, as if scarcely belonging to the form that had once been so proud of it.

The hair had been formerly of a bright golden colour, but now appeared dull, and streaked with grey.

Still, the priest seemed to recognise it, and for a moment his features relaxed, his eye dilated, and the fierce, stern look gave way to one of unutterable love. His lips parted, and he murmured one word: "Eugenie!"

It was like the lull in the middle of the hurricane.

Darker and darker grew the expression of his face, denoting the storm within his breast. Pent up for years, it seemed now about to burst forth in all its fury, to sweep away everything in its

headlong course. Yet he restrained it with an iron will. He could not vent it upon the speechless, inanimate form of her who lay upon that bed. No; he must reserve it for some living object. Woe unto him upon whom that long-smothered hurricane of vengeance should fall !

So occupied was the priest with this dark and ominous thought, that he scarcely heard a knock at the door.

The dying woman's maid entered, and told him that the physician had returned.

" Say unto him, my daughter, that the minister of the Holy Church is with her, about to administer the last sacrament, that she may not appear before her God unannealed. She is confessing her sins, and will soon be ready to depart in peace."

The woman hesitated, but the priest quickly shut the door, and turned again into the room.

As he did so, he, for the first time, perceived

a singular piece of furniture that stood on the small marble table where the wax-light was burning.

It was a figure of our Saviour, crucified. The cross was of ivory, curiously inlaid with ebony and gold; the figure of solid silver, beautifully chased, and nailed to the cross with golden nails, headed by diamonds. The form was so life-like, and the chasing so elegant, that none but a perfect master-hand could have wrought it. It was, indeed, the work of an artist, for on the back was written, in silver nails :

“BENVENUTO CELLINI TO THE CARDINAL PIETRA.”

The cross stood on a small rosewood stand, on a panel of which were two small, though exquisitely-finished paintings, separated by scroll-work. The one on the left hand represented a man on horseback, with a visor over his face, snatching a child from a struggling female, with

a young and handsome cavalier lying bleeding at her feet. In the distance was a wood, with some figures on horseback emerging from it. The other was more simple, containing only a beautiful girl, with long, golden hair, kneeling in a supplicating posture at the feet of a dark-browed Cardinal, in his scarlet robes. There was a scroll at the foot of each compartment. On the left :

“WOE TO THE OPPRESSORS.”

On the right :

“COMFORT YE THE MOURNERS.”

The feet were of richly-chased scroll-work, with a tree growing out of a rock, embossed on the silver, and between them and the pictures there was a small drawer, the key-hole of which was a pierced pearl.

It was as pretty a little shrine as ever a fair devotee bowed the knee to.

The priest looked at it with mingled admira-

tion and curiosity, but, when his first surprise was over, and he examined it more minutely, the same dark flash which the features of the dying woman had called up, again passed over his countenance.

The left-hand panel excited a sinister smile, but his brow contracted with fierce passion when his black, glittering eyes became fixed on the other.

“It was you, then, my Lord Cardinal” muttered the priest, in a deep, smothered, husky voice,—“it was you, then, who stood betwixt me and my love—my love and my vengeance! You—the Cardinal!—one of the shining lights of our Holy Church, who sheltered and protected the fugitive heretic! Anathema! — Maranatha! Be thou accursed! But thou art dead, and my curses are unavailing!” added he, with concentrated bitterness.

Oh, it was a terrible sight! The priest—the holy man—the messenger of peace—gnashing

his teeth, and cursing the dead from the foul depths of his heart, before the figure to which his knee ought to have bowed in humble adoration ! and this, too, in the chamber of the dying ! It was terrible to hear, instead of the heart-felt prayer, that fearful anathema from the lips of him who should have brought tidings of consolation to the departing soul !

Now, for the first time, the priest perceived a small golden key, hanging by a thread of twisted hair from an arm of the cross. Was it curiosity alone, or did he expect to find in the drawer some precious relic, that he opened it ?

The slight grating of the lock in the silence of the chamber startled him, and he paused and turned his head round, as if the thought of sacrilege had passed before him. Then he went and bolted the door, returned with stealthy pace, drew back the curtains of the bed again, and listened intently, to hear if the dying lady still breathed. As he stooped over her, her lips

parted, and she murmured in a whisper, sweet and plaintive as the sighing of the wind amidst the aspen leaves :

“ My son ! my son ! ”

The voice, low as it was, seemed to him to echo through the room. The words rang in his ears painfully ; they went back—far, far back—from the present time, into the dreamy past ; they recalled to his memory something that made his eyes flash fire, his limbs tremble, and his breath come shorter and quicker. He wished to hear more, in spite of his agitation, but the invalid's eyes remained fixed, and her lips closed again. He turned away, and went back to the crucifix, and took from the drawer a small flat purse, such as the Moors make, of crimson velvet, embroidered with gold. There was a folded paper enclosed in it. Was it some charm against the evil eye, or something more holy, thus carefully preserved ?

The priest opened the paper, and read its

contents. The effect on him was strange: at first he appeared perfectly paralyzed; then a mocking smile passed over his countenance, as he said, "Chaumelin would call this a special act of Providence, and thank God for it; but I am not such a hypocrite—I call it chance, and thank myself; but whichever it be, chance or Providence, *my* object is attained. The book is open before me, and I can read it." As he said this, the priest returned the purse to the drawer, shut and locked it, and hung the small key again on the arm of the cross; but placed the paper carefully about his own person, and went back again to the bedside.

Even in those few brief moments a visible change had taken place in the countenance of the invalid. Death was creeping on slowly, but surely, foreshadowing with unmistakable signs his fearful advent. The priest perceived that her end was near: he went hastily to the toilette-table, took up a pair of scissors, and, returning

to the bed, cut off a tress of that beautiful golden hair, and placed it in his bosom. Was there love or hate in this simple act? When he had done this, he rang the bell sharply, and desired the maid who answered it to let the physician know that a sudden change had taken place, and that her mistress was evidently dying; and he requested her to send up his assistant directly, if he had arrived, lest it should be too late to administer the extreme unction.

This done, the priest, having deposited the phial of consecrated oil on the little marble table, placed himself in an attitude of humble prayer, before the crucifix. The physician entered, followed by the maid and a sickly-looking, middle-aged man, dressed in a black soutane, and carrying a cross, a small vase of holy water, and a sprinkling-brush. He wore a tonsure, and his look was downcast and depressed. As they came into the room, the priest rose and bowed lowly to the physician,

who returned it slightly ; not recognising, in his surplice and violet robes, the shabbily-dressed man whom he had seen sitting by the Baronet's fire.

" I fear the lady is in the death agony," said the priest, addressing the physician in French, as he approached the bed and looked at her now agonized countenance. Her jaw had fallen, her eyes were fixed on vacancy, and her small white hands were clutching nervously at the bed-clothes.

The physician turned away sorrowfully, and said : " You are a minister of the Catholic religion, I presume, Sir, by your dress : if so, perform your offices quickly, for in a few minutes she will have ceased to breathe."

Chaumelin lighted a consecrated taper at the wax-light. The Abbé, with the holy water brush, sprinkled the pillow and face of the invalid, repeating the prayer commencing "*Proficiscere anima Christiana ;*" then he took

the silver crucifix, and held it to her lips to kiss.

He bowed his head down over her : in doing this, with a convulsive effort, the dying lady started up in her bed, and, with a low but agonizing shriek, that pierced the ears of all, she cried : " My son ! my son ! " Then her head sank slowly back upon the pillow, and her sad soul separated from her wasted body.

In that last moment upon earth, she had recognised the countenance of the priest, which, in truth, bore a strange resemblance to the face of the man in the left-hand panel, who was carrying off the child.

" *Requiescat in pace,*" said the Abbé, agitated violently, in spite of himself : he, however, whispered something to Chaumelin, and hurried hastily from the room.

The maid closed the ghastly eyes of the corpse, shedding many tears, and lamenting bitterly the loss of her dear mistress. The

physician, accustomed to scenes of death and misery, remained a minute or two as if watching whether life was really extinct; then, dashing away a tear, he took a pinch of snuff, and left the room. The assistant, Chaumelin, placed a small cross on her breast, between her hands, the vase of holy water and the sprinkling-brush at her feet, and knelt down by the bedside.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE is no doubt something fascinating in crime, particularly when an ascendancy over another being may be gained by its commission, in conjunction with the temporary gratification of the passions which ensues ; but when to this is added satisfaction for injuries real or imagined, when the cup of vengeance is placed ready to the hand of him who thirsts for it, can he, who has already tasted its contents, refrain from draining it to the bottom ?

As the priest descended the stairs, such

reflections as the following occurred to his mind: "When I entered this house I was poor and needy, I am now rich and can gratify my passions. A few hours ago I was held in no estimation by a miserable lacquey, I have now power over the master; I, the persecuted, can persecute, for have I not the means of vengeance; and shall I, the despised, the rejected one, not use them? She called upon her son—which? What matters it, do I not hate them, loathe them both? are they not the offspring of her who treated me with scorn and contumely, changing my deep love into burning, everlasting hate, and scathing this heart with unquenchable fire? Nothing now impedes me, I am free—free to pursue my course. Eugenie, didst thou think when I snatched thy first-born from thy panting bosom that my vengeance was satisfied?" and he laughed a bitter, scornful laugh. "No; it lives, it lives. Though thou art gone, thine image survives in thy son. I will blast his hopes, I will thwart him in all he under-

takes. He shall be a bastard, and thy memory shall be dishonoured for ever. And what has given me this power? Chance. Through this little scrap of paper, casually obtained, I will work my way into a new life. I will be no longer the poor persecuted priest, but once more the fashionable, the sought-after, Marquis de Charolles. Shall I give this paper up to the besotted man who has employed me in this business? I scarcely know its value yet, though I can guess it. I must worm the whole secret from him, and then vengeance and pleasure."

As he muttered the last words to himself over and over again, the priest knocked at the door of the room where he had left Sir Walter sitting by the fire, and was desired to come in. He found the Baronet exactly in the same position that he had left him in, nor indeed had he stirred during the priest's absence, but had remained gazing at the fire in a dull, abstracted mood, stupified and fixed by the consciousness

of crime, and scarcely daring to think ; but the return of the priest aroused him at once.

“ Well, Monsieur l’Abbé,” said the Baronet, impatiently ; “ have you done what we agreed upon ? ”

“ No, Sir Walter,” replied the priest, deliberately, “ I have not—it was, as I feared, too late—the lady is dead.”

“ Dead ! ” almost screamed the Baronet, falling back in his chair ; “ then I am a ruined man—ruined in purse, ruined in reputation.”

“ Not quite, Sir Walter,” said the priest, after a short pause. “ Do you bear much regard for the young man you sent for—your nephew, I believe ? ”

“ Do you think that a man who stands on the brink of a precipice, kisses the hand of the one who would and will push him over ? ”

“ No ; but he would be grateful to him who would stretch his hand out to snatch him from it.”

The drowning man catches at straws. There was something in the priest's words and manner that gave the Baronet a vague hope that all was not yet lost, and he looked inquiringly at the Abbé.

"Now, Sir Walter, what would you think if I said that I could prove this young man illegitimate—a bastard, in fact?" then he corrected himself, "I do not mean to say that I can do so at the present, but I have obtained a clue which may lead to that result."

"I would call you my guardian angel," cried the Baronet, eagerly.

Strangely perverted term, as if an angel could be the despoiler of the orphan, the traducer of the innocent! But would not the murderer call the man by the same title who sheltered and concealed him and his crime from the world, and gave him the means of existence?

"I am to understand, then," continued the

priest, "that you have but little affection for your brother's son and his widow's memory?"

"Just such love as Macbeth bore to Duncan. I do not know, Monsieur l'Abbé, whether you read our Shakspeare, but if you remember these lines, you can apply them ;

'That thou would'st highly that would'st thou holily,
Would'st not play false, and yet would'st wrongly win.'

You have no doubt perceived that there is something to be won ; and I will now tell you what it is, that you may thoroughly understand this business."

The Baronet then narrated the sudden death of Sir William Deverell, his strange will, the enormous wealth that would pass into other hands than his, although he was heir-at-law, by the wording of it, unless the deceased lady could be proved to be a Roman Catholic. The embarrassment of his affairs in consequence of

relying on obtaining at least a portion of the Deverell estates ; in fact, that he was a ruined man if they should fall to his nephew and not to him.

The Abbé listened attentively, and when Sir Walter had finished, said :

“ May I ask what it was that the physician so mysteriously communicated to you ? ”

The Baronet repeated what the physician had whispered to him.

“ Do you not think there is sufficient evidence to prove that Mrs. Conway was a Catholic ? ” inquired the priest, hesitatingly.

“ No,” replied the Baronet, impatiently ; “ the evidence is only presumptive. Both judge and jury, being Protestants, would look upon it with suspicion ; nothing having been apparently done by her own act or free-will.”

“ That is unfortunate. What sort of young man is her son ? ”

“ He is clever, proud, and high-spirited ; but he has not what is commonly called a well-

regulated mind, for he has been left too much to himself."

"Does he, then, not love his mother much?"

"He has been away at school and college a great deal, and has spent most of his vacations with us, in Devonshire; and although his mother was generally there, she was always an invalid, and kept to her room; so that he has not seen so much of her as sons usually do; still he always loved her, and is proud of her high birth and noble family."

The thought of Arthur's attachment to his own daughter occurred to him at that moment, but that he reserved to himself for the present.

"Cause it to be whispered abroad," said the priest, in a hoarse, unnatural voice, for the struggle had commenced, "that Mr. and Mrs. Conway were never married; that is, not legally married; for rumour, with her pointed tongue, will soon bring it to the first point."

“What good will that do, if we cannot prove it?”

“Leave that to me, Sir Walter; I will undertake to prove it, if necessary. He will hear this, he will inquire into it, he shall find that there is strong evidence to that effect, which, if produced, might blast his mother’s fair fame. Then, if I can read human nature, and this young man is such as you describe him to be, he will not go to law at all. The memory of his mother must be sacred, and he will not like to run the chance of its being defamed, openly defamed in a court of law, which it must necessarily be, if a trial takes place; but it must come upon him by degrees. If you are rash, and threaten him with proceedings at once, he will kick against it like a young colt, harnessed and put into the shafts without any previous preparation.”

“I cannot see my way through all this; it is too complicated for me,” said the Baronet, impatiently.

“ The light will dawn upon you, Sir Walter, from a quarter where you least expect it,” replied the priest; “ but I must take the liberty of asking you some more questions. Do you know where Mr. and Mrs. Conway were married ?”

“ I have always understood that the ceremony was performed at the British Embassy, at Naples, after they had fled from Rome.”

“ It would be as well to ascertain that fact, for I have a shrewd suspicion that they were not so married. Does her son think you know more about it ?”

“ I believe not. A son does not usually inquire into his mother’s marriage certificate. But, Monsieur, what do these questions tend to ?”

“ Pardon me, Sir Walter; if I am to proceed any further in this affair, you must look upon me as your legal adviser. Depend upon it, I have my reasons for asking them.”

The Baronet motioned to him to go on, for

he did not see how he could gain his point without the priest's help ; and there was evidently something known to him beyond what he had yet said.

“ You are certain they were not married in England ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ What became of them after they left Naples ? ”

“ They passed some months, I believe, in Switzerland, and embarked at Hamburgh for England. Mrs. Conway was then *enceinte*. They suffered shipwreck on the Norfolk coast, and there this young man was born. But her health never recovered the shock, and she had no more children.”

The priest mused for a short time, and said to himself, “ If they were married at Hamburgh, they must have wanted to quiet some scruples of conscience. They were either not married at Naples at all, or were married under false names.”

CHAPTER V.

IN the spring of the year 1795, not long after that ferocious but extraordinary character Victor Hugues had carried ultra-republican notions and cruelties into the Caribbean islands, there lay at anchor, off the beautiful island of Dominica, a huge lumbering vessel. Although separated from her convoy, she had managed to elude the swarms of privateers as well as of men-of-war which the French commissioner with wonderful activity had congregated in those seas to attack the possessions and harass the commerce of the "tyrant George."

Guadaloupe, retaken from the English, was now the head-quarters of this worthy delegate from the Convention, and from thence he published the following edict, which will give some idea of the tone assumed by these ultra-tyrannical republicans.

PROCLAMATION OF VICTOR HUGUES.

LIBERTY—LAW—EQUALITY.

“VICTOR HUGUES, delegated Commissary of the National Convention to the Windward Islands. Whereas, the crimes committed by the British officers as well in the capture as in the defence of the conquered islands, exhibited a character of so consummate and odious a villainy, as not to be paralleled in history; and whereas, the rights of humanity, of war, and of nations, have been violated by Charles Grey, General; John Jervis, Admiral; Thomas Dundas, Major-General and Governor of Gua-

daloupe ; Charles Gordon, a general officer ; and other subaltern officers who imitated them ; and whereas, also the robberies, murders, assassinations, and other crimes committed by them, ought to be transmitted to posterity, it is resolved, that the body of Thomas Dundas interred in Guadaloupe, 3rd of June (slave style), shall be taken up, and given a prey to the birds of the air ; that upon the same spot there shall be erected, at the expense of the republic, a monument, bearing on one side this decree ; and on the other, the following inscription : ‘ This ground, restored to liberty by the bravery of republicans, was polluted by the body of Thomas Dundas, Major-General, and Governor of Guadaloupe for the * * * * George III. In recollecting his crimes, the public indignation caused him to be taken up, and has ordered this monument to be erected to hand them down to posterity.’

“ Given at the Port of Liberty, (20th

Frimaire) in the third year of the French Republic, one and indivisible.

“VICTOR HUGUES.

“Viel-Secretary.”

There was a peculiar look about this ship as she lay a little to the northward of the then busy little town of Roseau, or Charlotte Town, heaving lazily to the long unbroken swell. She was high out of the water, wall-sided, with huge bluff bows, and square stern; her yards were badly squared; her dirty sails, half furled, hung in loose and ungraceful disorder; the ropes were badly coiled or towing overboard. She could not be a merchant vessel for she bore a pendant, and her slovenly appearance precluded the idea of her being a man-of-war. A white number painted on her bow told the initiated that she was what sailors commonly call a lobster-box, and what soldiers curse as a hell upon the waters, a transport. A few light

canoes, manned by grinning negroes, were passing from her to the shore, laden nearly to the water's edge with red-uniformed soldiers, some of whom were already ranged on the white beach, while others were scrambling up amongst the rocks and shingle as the receding wave left the canoe stranded for a moment.

At the gangway nearest the island, sedulously watching the men as they stepped into these frail conveyances, stood a young officer in the uniform of the line of that time. He seemed young, very young for his station, for he wore the two epaulets denoting that he already bore a Captain's commission. His features were small and regular, his complexion delicately fair; a profusion of light-brown hair curled over his well-formed head; his eyes were of soft, sweet blue, shaded by dark eyelashes; altogether his face might have been deemed feminine, but for the strong determination expressed in his small but beautifully-chiselled mouth. He was rather over the middle height; and his frame so beau-

tifully proportioned, and so well put together that, although at first sight he might have appeared small and delicate, yet when you began to notice the wonderful symmetry of each limb, and the unanimity (if we may so express it) of the whole, it was no longer a matter of surprise that this apparently slight young man could perform extraordinary feats of strength and activity. There was something very remarkable in his countenance, for although his complexion was youthfully fair, and his eye bright and joyous, a slight shade of melancholy at times pervaded the whole; even when occupied as he then was in landing his men with safety, it passed over his features like the shadow of a cloud over the sunny landscape.

The last canoe had put off from the ship, the soldiers had all reached the shore without an upset, and the sharks were defrauded of all chance of a feast for that day at least; and, although an occasional ducking as the soldiers tumbled out of the rickety canoes on to the

slippery rocks had served to make the grinning negroes show their huge white teeth, and chuckle at the buckra men getting wet, no casualty of any consequence had occurred: the young officer turned away from the gangway with a deep-drawn sigh. In the blue translucent water he had seen a gaunt monster hovering about near the ship, in evident expectation of a banquet. Not many hundred yards from the vessel the half-putrid carcass of a bullock was perceptibly torn, worried and dragged about by a host of smaller sharks; but this one, as if he despised so mean a feast, seemed to watch each canoe as it put off from the vessel until it reached the shore, and all this time he was distinctly visible to the anxious eyes of our hero, but when the last canoe ran high upon the shingly beach in safety, the monster suddenly disappeared beneath the vessel, and could be no more seen.

As Arthur Conway turned towards the quarter-deck, he felt his mind relieved of a great burden; yet he shuddered as the dim

outline of the horrible shark still swam bluey and mistily before his eyes, and he still felt sick and dizzy. Before he had quite recovered his self-possession, he heard a voice, musical, low, and sweet, but in a mixture of broken French and English, imploring to know why he was to be flogged.

“I’ll teach you, you infernal black nigger!” said the rough voice of the master of the transport, whose name was Jack Diver, but who generally went by the *soubriquet* of “Gentleman John,” probably because he was the very reverse of that often wrongly-bestowed title, “I’ll teach you, you thieving blackbeetle, to come on board His Gracious Majesty’s ship ‘Sally’ without my leave! You larned your manners, no doubt, from them impudent Frenchmen; but we’ll see if an English cat can’t change ’em. Here, bostwain’s mate, give this fellow a dozen,—the thieves’ cat mind!”

“Ay, ay, sir!” replied that worthy, grinning from ear to ear with delight at the prospect of

trying his hand on something new. "No need to order him to strip."

Three or four of the brawny sailors had laid hold of him in the meantime, and were in the act of seizing him to some of the rigging, as the young officer turned from the gangway.

Arthur Conway saw at a glance that this man, whatever he might be, was no negro.

As he has rather a conspicuous part to play in some of the scenes in this tale, we will now attempt to give our readers his portrait at full length.

His body, which was nearly naked, was straight, and well-proportioned; his head was placed evenly and gracefully on his shoulders, which were broad, and yet low; his hips, too, were broad, but his limbs were slight and clean, though not deficient in muscle. His skin was of an olive-colour, not much darker than those of Murillo's Spanish boys. His eyes were small, and deeply sunk, but intensely black and piercing; his hair jet black, and perfectly straight; his nose

flat and broad, not like that of a negro, however, for his nostrils were neither large nor distended; his facial angle was nearly that of the European, and his chin was small, though, like the rest of his face, it was round; nor were the cheek-bones high and prominent, as in the negro. The only feature which seemed to ally him to that race was the mouth, which was very wide, and full of large, white teeth; still, his lips had none of the African blubber about them. A line, or furrow, extended from each corner of the mouth to the ears, which were perforated with pieces of dark tortoise-shell. His face was, in other respects, perfectly smooth, and free from any sign of a beard, and his nose and under-lip had been evidently pierced like his ears, but there were no ornaments in them.

His dress was very simple, consisting only of a striped cotton shirt, without sleeves, reaching to the knee, and bound round the waist with a belt, covered with feathers. The rest of his

body, head, legs, arms, and feet, were utterly unprotected from the fierce glare of the tropical sun, and the lash of the brawny boatswain.

Although this man did not utter any actual lamentations, his features and manner did not display the stoical indifference to disgrace and physical pain so conspicuous in the Red Indian of the Western Continent of America. On the contrary, he seemed to be perfectly aware of what he was about to suffer, although pride evidently struggled to subdue all other emotions and exclamations than the simple interrogation, often repeated, of why he was to be flogged? He could not understand it, nor could the gallant young officer, whose attention now became suddenly fixed on the scene that was being acted before him.

The native, or whatever he might be, was now seized to the rigging; the sailors stood on each side of him, to prevent his freeing himself by his struggles; the ruffianly master of the transport stood by, smoking a cigar, waiting

impatiently for the play to commence; the sturdy boatswain, stripped to his shirt-sleeves, had already bared his brawny arms, and was passing his fingers through the tails of the formidable thieves' cat, and, balancing himself properly, was measuring his distance at the same time for the first stroke, when the captive, turning his head round, caught the eye of our hero.

There was something in it that gave him hope. Although his lips did not move, the expression of his face was of so beseeching a nature—so evidently appealing to the gentleman, that, though he did not speak, Captain Conway understood it. He walked forward, and, addressing the master of the transport in a courteous tone and manner, asked him what the man was to be flogged for?

“What is that to you?” replied the polite Jack Diver, with an oath. “I command this ship, don't I? so I'll thank you not to interfere

(with me when I choose to punish a black scoundrel. Ha ! ha ! a pretty go truly ! Here's a lobster disgusted at a little back tickling,—and only a nigger's hide to be tanned !”

“ I beg your pardon, Captain Diver,” replied the young officer ; “ this man is no negro ; and, even if he were, I do not see why he should suffer such a punishment, without any apparent cause.”

“ What do I know of causes ? Perhaps you would like to be president of a court-martial on the nigger ! Lay on Andrews ! One !—I'll be big drummer.”

The boatswain's mate drew back, and flourished his cat scientifically.

“ Stay !” interrupted Conway, “ only one word. You would not have dared to do this, if Colonel Farrer had been on board.”

“ It's my turn now,” said Jack Diver, with a sneer. “ Thank the stars, I've emptied my pot of all the lobsters, big and little, for this

bout, but one, and him I don't care a snap of the finger for."

"You shall repent this, if you ever put your foot on shore," said Conway, a bright flush passing over his face, which was actually pale with suppressed excitement.

"Ha, ha!" replied, in his turn, the Master, grinning. "What! the delicate Captain going to fight for a nigger's hide?"

The attention of the sailors, who held the native, or whatever he was, was called off by this colloquy. They hated Jack Diver, it is true, for he was a bully; but they did not like to see him "come over," as they would call it, by a soldier officer; so they watched with evident glee this sparring match of words.

As quick as thought, the native perceived it; and, taking advantage of their distraction, with a sudden and powerful effort he broke from the lashings, and from their grasp, and with a nimble spring, vaulted over the bulwarks, and

plunged, feet foremost, into the deep blue water. Ere the wave had closed over his head, Conway had rushed to the gangway, and, throwing a rope overboard, was in the act of following it himself, when he was rudely, though not ill-naturedly, restrained by the boatswain.

“ Psha ! Mister, you can’t drown them niggers—they swim like porpusses, and dive like ducks,” said he, shaking his cat at where he supposed the man to be.

“ The shark ! the shark ! O God ! the man will be killed. Can nothing be done to save him. This is too horrible ! ” exclaimed the young officer, striving to break from the boatswain.

Suddenly the man appeared on the surface of water, full fifty yards from the ship, and striking out boldly for the shore.

But at the same moment, an indistinct shadowy thing glided from beneath the vessel through the pellucid water, in the same direction.

“The shark! the shark!” again shouted Conway.

The man seemed to understand him, for he raised one hand out of the water, as if making some signal, then dived again far below the surface.

With intense anxiety the young officer watched for his re-appearance; even the Master and his men had suddenly become interested in his escape, for, cruel and unfeeling as they were, there was still some latent spark of compassion in their rough breasts, and every sailor detests the very name of a shark.

For nearly a minute and a half the man remained under water, and when he again reappeared, he was half-way to the beach.

How he had eluded the shark, could not be seen; but sure enough the tyrant of the deep had been disappointed in his expected banquet. Perhaps, like the lion and the tiger, when they miss their spring, the fish of prey, when he is foiled in his dash, returns skulking and sulky

to his lurking-place ; and so it seemed, for the grim shark sailed slowly back, scarcely moving his fins, to his stand beneath the shadow of the lumbering transport.

The head of the man just showed itself for a minute or two, and again he dived ; the next thing that was seen of him was his dripping figure scrambling up the shingly beach ; a moment more, and his form was lost amongst the rocks.

“ You may thank your God, if you ever do such a thing,” said Conway, in a low, soft tone, and turning to the Master, “ that this man’s blood is not upon your head.”

In these few minutes, Arthur Conway had confirmed to himself a bitter, implacable enemy, and had made a firm, sincere, though humble friend.

CHAPTER VI.

THREE days after the occurrence related in the last chapter, the 'Sally' was still lying at anchor in the roadstead off Roseau. This vessel had brought out detachments of troops from England for the different islands, to supply the fearful gaps made in the ranks of the British regiments by the bullets of the republicans, and by the still more deadly weapons of nature—the vomito and the dysentery.

After discharging her live lading, the 'Sally' was to take in a cargo of sugar, coffee, and other

produce, and then return to her port in England, as soon as a safe convoy could be procured. The lading had not yet commenced; everything on board was still, and no watch was kept.

An awning was stretched over the high poop-deck, and beneath its shade, swinging in a low hammock, with his face upturned to the sky, and his head luxuriously propped up with pillows, lay the Captain of the transport, smoking.

A bottle of old rum, with a wet napkin round it, and a porous earthenware jar, or monkey, as it is called, of cool water, with some fresh-gathered limes, stood within reach of his extended arm.

Jack Diver was apparently in that self-complacent mood, which a good glass of old liquor, a real havannah, and perfect indolence, creates under a tropical sky. His troubles and anxieties were over for the time being, and he thought that he might as well pass the time of in-

action in the luxurious manner we have described.

He had not gone on shore—why, it is difficult to say ; perhaps the threat of the young officer, perhaps the fear of infection, prevented him ; for, even at that season of the year, the terrible yellow fever was lurking about in the purlieus of the town. Yet this could scarcely be ; for, though a bully with his men, Jack Diver was no coward : he had already been distinguished, on several occasions, in severe encounters with the French privateers ; and, under ordinary circumstances, would have fought his ship until it sank. Nevertheless, he had not gone on shore.

As he lay there ruminating, a few broken sentences and exclamations burst at times from his lips, as he removed the cigar from his mouth, plainly indicating the train of thought that was passing in his mind.

“ The young jackanapes ! To be bullied by a beardless boy, before my own men—my

own crew ; and by him, too, above all others—he who has done me so much injury already ! Does he know who I am ? Rot the young aristocrat ! And he threatened me, too ? Yes, by God ! I will be revenged on him yet. Shall they always grind us under their heels, the cursed tyrants ?” (Captain Diver, Captain Diver, you forget who are the real tyrants.)
“ As sure as the devil is — ”

“ Talk of the devil, and he is sure to appear, Captain,” said a voice with a slightly foreign accent, close beside him.

Whilst the Captain of the transport was lying in his hammock, a light and elegantly-shaped canoe, paddled by one man in the stern, with another lying at full length in the bottom of the fragile conveyance, came gliding by the town from the northward. It passed the stern of the ‘Sally,’ which was swinging with her head pointed to the light air from the land ; then it stopped, and hovered there for a few moments, as if uncertain whether it was the

right ship. Presently, with a few strokes of his paddle, the man in the stern whirled the canoe round, and shot her under the high counter of the 'Sally.'

The man in the bottom of the canoe rose up cautiously and silently, and seizing one of the ropes which was hanging carelessly over the sides of the slovenly vessel, swung himself up, hand over hand, peeped over the bulwarks, and then, with a satisfied air, crept quietly under the awning, on to the poop, and stood by the Captain's hammock. The man in the canoe paddled away again, but only to a short distance from the transport, and commenced fishing.

The man who now stood on the deck of the transport was dressed in a linen blouse, with a leather belt round the waist, and braided at the edges and pockets with three different colours. He wore duck trowsers, and light sailors' pumps, with silver buckles in them, and cut low, showing a pair of neat silk stockings. His

figure was slight and active. His shirt was open at the throat, which was completely hidden by a long, pointed, black beard; bushy whiskers, and a thick moustache, shaded his cheeks and upper lip; round his neck was carelessly knotted a silk handkerchief of three colours; and from his ears hung two splendid ear-rings. His nose was aquiline, and his eyes fierce and sparkling. A large Panama hat completely covered and shaded the upper part of his face: so that, between whiskers, beard, moustache, and hat, his whole countenance was in a sort of disguise.

His appearance was a strange mixture of dandyism and ferocity; a puppy of the first water turned pirate. He had overheard the half-muttered expressions of the Master, and they seemed sufficiently to suit his purpose, for he grinned significantly, and showed his fine white teeth beneath the dark bushy moustache, and shrugged his shoulders expressively as he chimed in with "Talk of the devil, and he is sure to appear."

The Master turned sulkily round in his hammock, for he was too lazy to be much surprised, and the old rum had rather deadened the keenness of his intellect; but when he saw the extraordinary figure by his side, he could not help starting as if he had in reality seen some Satanic emissary, for the grin was still on the stranger's countenance; but he quickly recovered himself, and said, in his usual bullying tone and manner:

“And who the devil are you? And what do you want?”

“I have come to offer you my services,” replied the stranger, taking off his broad-leafed hat, and bowing to the Captain.

“I don't want your services: be off with you.”

“Come, Captain,” said the stranger, with the most perfect coolness, helping himself, at the same time, to a glass of rum from the bottle, and holding it up as men do when they

drink a toast, "Here's to you. Rot the aristocrats! Down with the tyrants! *Vive la République!*"

The Master of the transport rolled himself out of the hammock, sat up on the deck, and rubbed his eyes with astonishment; for he was by no means aware that he had spoken aloud.

"Yes," continued the stranger, "shall they still grind us under their heels? What say you, Captain?"

Jack Diver muttered a fearful oath. "Who are you, that you should read my thoughts? And why do you come here?"

"To be at your service, Captain. You know his infernal majesty—Bah! what am I saying?—I mean the chief commissary of the lower regions is generally at hand when wanted; and you were speaking of him just now, Captain."

"You don't mean to say —"

"Not exactly," said the stranger, with a

shrug: " I am Citizen Jean-Marie le Blanc; so called, because I'm black till I change my features."

" Change his features !" murmured the half-intoxicated Master; " he must be the devil himself, after all."

" Look you here, Captain," said the stranger, putting his hand suddenly to his face, and removing, in a second, whiskers, moustache, and beard, and leaving exposed the features of a very young and strikingly handsome man. " You see I only tell you the truth, though that's what the devil never did: I'm mortal, after all."

" Devil or man, what do want with me ?"

" You detest the aristocrats, Captain ?"

" Who are you ?"

" You would free yourself from the abominable tyrants ?"

" Tell me who and what you are, or I'll —"

" He threatened me too, Captain," interrupted the stranger, with a quiet sneer.

"Come, come, leave well alone, whoever you are," said Jack Diver, half petrified with astonishment; "I don't want to threaten you, but I do want to know who you are, and how you got on board?"

"One question is easily answered. You leave ropes towing overboard. The other depends on how you answer me."

"Come, you are the coolest chap I ever met with. I've half a mind to call the men, and see what you are made of. Why shouldn't I?"

"Because in the first place," replied the stranger, quietly drawing a small pistol from his pocket, cocking it, and presenting it at the master, "I should shoot you and then jump overboard—there is a canoe handy; and in the next place, because I want you, and you want me. Read this, Captain," continued the stranger, replacing the pistol in his breast, "read this while I smoke a cigar." And Le Blanc, for so we will in future call the stranger, handed a paper to the Captain, and

then seating himself quietly on the deck, lighted his cigar, and puffed away quite unconcernedly, whilst Jack Diver read with difficulty the document so strangely handed to him.

The paper which the Master was now reading, was one of those furious and malignant proclamations, issued by order of the Convention, through the medium of its worthy commissary, Victor Hugues, against the "tyrant George," and his satellites. It called upon the inhabitants of the different islands of all colours to rise, and throw off the yoke of the infamous English; it proclaimed those that did so citizens and soldiers of the Republic, and threatened with the guillotine all of French origin or extraction, who should serve in any way under the British Government, or who should not join the Republican army on its landing.

Le Blanc, though apparently taken up with his fragrant havannah, was all the while watch-

ing with great interest, the effect of this proclamation on the Master of the transport.

It seemed, however, rather to offend than please him, for with an oath Jack Diver crushed the paper in his hand, as he said :

“ What have I to do with Victor Hugs, or whatever you call him ; curse me, though I hate all aristocrats, I’m a downright John Bull, and look upon every Frenchman as a natural born enemy.”

“ Very true and very proper,” replied the Frenchman shrugging his shoulders, and elevating his eyebrows ; “ but, Captain, are there none of these aristocrats on whom you wish particularly to be revenged ?”

“ Yes, by God !” replied the Master, striking the hen-coop with his clenched fist, “ yes, there is one whose life blood I would suck drop by drop till he died.”

“ He told me the truth,” muttered the stranger to himself. “ I have him now.”

“What are you muttering about there, you French devil? Why don’t you speak out, and tell me more? for more I am sure you know.”

“Perhaps I do,” said Le Blanc, with an air of mystery.

“Why not tell me at once without all this palavering?”

“I cannot explain it here, but if you will come on shore, Captain, I will show you, I think, how you can be revenged on him.”

“How the devil do you know that he is on shore in this paltry island?”

“Exactly so.”

“What do you mean by exactly so?”

“My black spirit told me.”

“Well, you are the rummiest devil I ever saw.”

“Light brown hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, slender, well-made, aristocratic,” continued the stranger, with a pause between each of the descriptions.

More and more surprised, the Master gazed

open-mouthed at the stranger, who, knocking the ashes off the end of his cigar, quietly, yet significantly, added :

“ Will you come on shore now, Captain ?”

The Master mused for a few minutes. The prospect of revenge tempted him, heated as his imagination was by the potency of his draughts of rum, and he assented. Requesting the stranger to wait for him on the poop, whilst he went forward to make some arrangements with his mate, in case of any unexpected calls upon him during his stay on shore, he descended the poop-ladder, leaving *Le Blanc* alone.

The stranger went to the stern, and whistled shrilly. The man in the canoe drew up his fishing lines, and with a few strokes of his paddle, again shot the canoe under the high counter of the ‘ *Sally*.’

This man was dressed in a white jacket and loose linen trowsers, with a large straw hat flapped over his face. He seemed full of vigour and activity, and managed his canoe with beau-

tiful skill and address. When close to the vessel, Le Blanc stooped over the bulwarks, and asked, in a low tone, and in French: "Will it hold three?"

The man in the canoe held up three fingers, nodded, and pointed to another paddle lying in the bottom of the canoe, but did not speak.

In a few minutes, Jack Diver returned; he had taken the opportunity when below to plunge his head into cold water, and was consequently more sober than before.

"I have ordered a boat," said he, "to take us on shore."

"It is not at all necessary," replied Le Blanc, with a bow, "my gig is all ready here, and I have to request that you will do me the honour to take a seat in her."

"Where is she?"

"Here, Captain," replied Le Blanc, leading Jack Diver to the side, and showing him the canoe in which the man sat perfectly still, with

his head drooping forwards on his knees. "Take my word for it, you will find this the best and quickest conveyance, for we have some distance to go. My man, Henri, there, sends her along like the wind, when the water is smooth, as it is now; moreover, you must come with me, or not at all. If you are suspicious of me, stay; if you wish for revenge, come."

"What the devil do you want me to do?"

"Come and see, Captain. Revenge is sweet, as the book says."

The Master did not say another word, but lowered himself carefully into the canoe, and deposited himself, at full length, in the bottom; the stranger followed him, and, kneeling in the bow, took the second paddle. The man in the stern kept his head away, with his large hat flapped over his eyes as much as he could; but as the Master of the transport entered the canoe, a gleam of fierce delight flashed from his

black, expressive eyes, and he uttered a low laugh, in which you might have read revenge, and triumph, and scorn.

The canoe, impelled by skilful hands, soon emerged from the shadow of the 'Sally;' and with a graceful, gliding motion, it ran rapidly past the town of Roseau, the two rowers keeping measured time with their paddles.

The mouth of the beautiful emerald-green river, that gives the name to the town, is soon passed.

On, with the same even, graceful-gliding, they shoot over the surface of that lake-like sea, close to the beach, where the densely foliated tamarind-trees line the margin, in long, unbroken rows, contrasting beautifully with the snow-white sand.

Presently the land presented a bolder and rougher appearance; precipitous frowning cliffs, furrowed here and there with rugged water-courses, and dotted with quaintly foliated plants

and shrubs, came boldly down nearly to the water's edge, just leaving a narrow, winding, rocky track, sufficiently wide for a horse to pass. Dark, misshapen rocks began to stud the glistening sand, and show themselves here and there with black, rough crests, peeping out from the green, translucent water, into which the rays of the sun seemed to penetrate far below the surface.

Still the canoe shot on, without a word being spoken, the splash of the paddles alone breaking the silence of the basking day, until round the boulder of a dark, red cliff they suddenly came, where a deep, sombre, narrow river glided noiselessly into the bosom of that glowing sea. With a whirl of his paddle, the man in the stern shot the light canoe into the stream.

Overshadowed, on both sides, by matted and tangled mangrove-trees, with branches interlaced, and drooping into the water, it seemed more like a deep, silent pool than the outlet of

a lovely river. Black masses of mud, now dried and baked by the scorching heat, appeared between the mangroves. Every now and then a huge, unearthly-looking iguana, with its scoloped back and long scaly tail, would glide, spectre-like, over them. Myriads of pestiferous mosquitoes and sand-flies buzzed and hummed busily, joying in a spot where the fierce glare never entered to disturb them in their mazy dance ; but, beyond this, there was no animal life ; it seemed the abode of solitude, of pestilence, and death.

For some distance, the canoe glided and twisted along the curvings of this Lethean stream, till the river began to move perceptibly, flowing over a harder bed ; rocks began to usurp the place of the black, slimy mud, and daylight again penetrated through the branches of the mangrove-trees. The water, instead of the turbid, inky hue, assumed a shade of emerald green ; and here and there a flake of snowy foam came floating and eddying along.

Presently the man in the stern motioned to Le Blanc to desist, and, with a single dextrous stroke of his own paddle, whirled the canoe suddenly round, up a small, narrow creek; bringing himself, at the same time, nearest the landing-place; and as the hollow cotton-tree grated lightly against the pebbles, he jumped nimbly out, and steadied the canoe with his hand.

“Here we are at last, Captain,” said Le Blanc, wiping away the beads of sweat that stood on his brow. “Henri, help the Captain out.”

The Master rose, and stretched out his hand towards Henri, to balance himself as he got out of the rickety conveyance; but the man seemed neither to hear his employer’s words, nor to see the motion; for he kept his head turned away, although he still held fast the canoe.

“Is the fellow deaf or sulky?” said Jack Diver, crawling out by himself.

A gleam of satisfaction crossed the man's face, as he gave his hand to Le Blanc. It was trembling with emotion, and he murmured some words in an unknown language.

Le Blanc looked at him as if he would have read what was passing in his mind, but Henri assumed so stolid an expression, that the Frenchman, quick as he was, could make nothing of it.

The two ran the canoe up, and lifting it, placed it snugly under the shadow of the castor-oil plants and long waving weeds, that grew in wild luxuriance in the moist soil.

The Frenchman, then leading the way along a track which wound amidst the rocks and tangled brushwood, and whistling gaily as he went, seemed in high spirits; but some vague sense of uneasiness appeared to harass the Master, for he looked repeatedly round and behind him with a suspicious glance at the man who had paddled the canoe. In truth, he had an undefinable feeling of dread of this

man, and a semi-consciousness that he had in some way seen him before ; but the man followed him, carrying his paddle in his hand, with a slouching, careless gait, and appeared not to notice anything, but kept his large hat flapped over his face.

Jack Diver, as he went along, tried several times to question him, but he did not reply ; and Le Blanc explained it by saying that Henri did not speak English.

CHAPTER VII.

THEY had gone about half a mile, and were in the middle of a thicket, when the man suddenly disappeared: his step was so noiseless, that neither the Master nor the Frenchman perceived it. When they had passed through this thicket, the ground became clearer, and a house stood before them.

It was a low, one-storied building, built of wood, on a stone basement, with a verandah on all four sides, and closely jalousied. There were very few signs of cultivation about it;

only here and there a huge plantain or banana flapped lazily its vast spreading leaves, or a tall, stately cabbage-palm lifted its straight and tapering stem, crowned with its waving plume, drooping leaves, and singular spike, amidst a dense mass of weeds of strange forms and luxuriant growth.

The Frenchman knocked with a peculiar rap at the door, which was shut and barred ; it was slowly and cautiously opened, and a voice, in French, demanded who was there.

“ *Vive la République ! Liberté ! Egalité !* ” said the Frenchman, with his usual volubility.

“ Is that you, Citizen Le Blanc ? Come in,” said a savage-looking, tall Mulatto, whose grim, flat face appeared at the door, like Satan peeping from behind a tree.

“ Who have you here, Lemantin ? ”

“ Jean Marinier, Père le Bar, Petun, two or three niggers, and myself. We expect the Chief directly, and several others.”

“ What news ? ”

“ Good enough. The paper takes well : we shall have plenty more here directly. But who is that with you ? ”

“ A new member ; one who will be most useful to us. ”

“ Has he taken the oath ? ”

“ Not as yet ; it will be necessary to deal cautiously with him at first. ”

“ Well, come in. ”

The room was quite dark, for the jalousies were all drawn down and closed ; and it was some time before the Master, coming as he did out of the glare of the day, could distinguish any objects. It is, perhaps, doubtful whether Jack Diver would have crossed the threshold at all, could he have distinctly seen the present inmates of this house, for, in truth, some of them were sufficiently repulsive ; but it was now too late to draw back ; for as soon as he and the Frenchman had entered, the door was imme-

diately pulled to, barred, and fastened by the Mulatto, who acted as door-keeper.

The conclave now assembled consisted of four or five of the French settlers of the island, half a dozen negroes, the Mulatto, Le Blanc, and the Master of the transport. Several of the negroes, nearly naked, were sprawling about, in a state of intoxication; whilst a horrid smell of rum and effluvium from their bodies pervaded the atmosphere. Those that were not drunk, were sucking pieces of sugar-cane, and jabbering together in broken French. The conversation amongst the rest was kept up in a desultory manner, the regular debate not having yet commenced; for they were waiting for the arrival of several other members of this strange convention.

The Frenchman and the Master seated themselves side by side on a box, that served for a sofa.

“It is true,” said the one named Le Bar, in

French, "that these cursed islanders have not more than a hundred regular troops, and that they are commanded by a mere boy. I saw them on parade, at Morne Bruce, myself, this morning."

"In a few days, is the festival of Les Roses and Les Marguerites; the niggers will be all together. What an opportunity that would be for a grand *coup* !" said another.

"You are decidedly wrong there, my friend," said Le Blanc, "for they would be prepared. Believe me, surprise is everything, just now."

"Ah !" said the Mulatto licking his lips, "I have my eyes on such a house—such a dear little black-eyed girl in it; *sacristie*, what an armful she would make."

"But you said, Citizen Le Bar," continued Le Blanc, "that the man who commanded the regulars was quite young—what was he like?"

"A handsome boy enough, fair-haired and

blue-eyed, just such a face as your creole girls rave about ; but, for my part, I should like to see it grinning in the saw-dust ; Mamselle Guillotine would kiss it nicely."

Le Blanc nudged the master with his elbow. "Do you understand, Captain, what Citizen Le Bar is saying?"

"No ; I don't understand your cursed jabber."

"He was describing your young friend, the aristocrat ; it seems he commands the regulars at Morne Bruce—what an opportunity for revenge !"

"I don't see that at all ; when a man is backed by his red coats, he is difficult to get at ; besides, I tell you once for all, that I won't lift a hand against my own countrymen, if that's what you want."

"No, we don't want you to do that ; but you can be the means of his disgrace, and disgrace to an aristocrat like him is worse than death."

“ I see, you want to make a cat’s-paw of me ; why don’t you do it yourself ? ”

“ Because he would suspect me, and I can’t get the opportunity ; but from one sailing under the same flag, he would suspect nothing.”

“ How is it to be done ? ”

“ Simply by giving him false information, which you can easily contrive to do ? ”

“ But that might endanger the safety of the island ; and though I hate all aristocrats, and would see all men equal, I tell you again, I will do nothing against my own countrymen.”

“ As you please, Captain ; but don’t you see that you have already put your foot into a trap ; if you really meant nothing, why come on shore with me—this company, I assure you is dangerous. I have only to point at you, and say ‘ Aristocrat,’ and you would see how their bristles would rise.”

“Devil as you are, you surely would not do that?”

“Why not?” replied Le Blanc, quite coolly; “if I were to let you go quietly now—if indeed I could do it at all—what is to prevent you from informing against us? Help me to revenge, and I will help you.”

“But tell me why you want to destroy this youngster. Is it simply because he is an Englishman and an aristocrat?”

“No, my dear Captain, no—those are only secondary causes,” replied Le Blanc, after a moment’s thinking. “No, but because I hate him as you do.”

“How can that be?” inquired the master, with surprise.

“Because he has already robbed me of my mistress; the fairest girl in all Dominica; curses on him—perhaps he has done the like to you, Captain.”

This was said at random.

A deep burning flush passed over the Master's countenance, and a half suppressed groan burst from his lips, but he did not reply.

"Shall these fair-haired aristocrats rob us of our mistresses, Captain, as they do of our rights?"

"No; by all the powers in hell, I am yours," said Jack Diver, holding out his fevered hand to the stranger, who grasped it with apparent cordiality,

"Will you take the oath then, Captain? it may rather surprise you."

"Anything—everything; give me but revenge."

"You shall have it; you and I together."

Three or four more settlers, and several coloured men, negroes, mulattoes, and quadroons had by this time dropped in.

"Where is the Chief?" inquired Le Blanc of one of them.

"He will be here directly; he is only wait-

ing to make a proper *entrée*," replied one of the new comers, with a sneer.

There came another knock at the door. The Mulatto opened it, and a singular figure presented itself, and stalked with measured strides into the centre of the room. This man, whose skin was of a dark olive colour, with piercing deep-sunken black eyes, and straight jetty hair, was nearly naked, except that around his waist, and reaching to the middle of his thighs, there hung a kind of tunic covered with the orange-coloured feathers of the bird called the cock of the woods, and the bright scarlet ones from the curry-curry. On his head was a small hat, or rather coronet, composed of the brilliant plumage of the humming-birds, the macaw, the parroquet, and the toucan; rings of gold were passed through his ears, and the cartilage of his nose; a large flat crescent of polished copper, encased in some dark hard wood, attached to a string, on which were threaded seeds of a bright

red colour, mixed with pieces of coral, depended from his neck to the middle of his chest; copper bracelets encircled his arms; and just above the knee were bands covered with the same red seeds as those round his neck; in other respects he was completely naked.

He waved his hand gracefully as a salute to all present, and sat down on a seat without speaking a word.

"Who is this man?" said Jack Diver, in a whisper to Le Blanc. "I think I have seen him before."

"I should think not; Captain Baron is not often seen, I assure you," replied Le Blanc; "it is only on such such rare occasions as these that he shows himself."

"Still, I can't help thinking so."

"Hush!" interrupted Le Blanc, "the proceedings of the meeting are about to commence."

The tall Mulatto, whose name was Lemantin, acted as master of the ceremonies.

By his arrangement the tables were cleared away from the centre of the room, and the conclave formed into a ring round it: all those who were not absolutely drunk, standing up. One of those magnificent white lilies, with a bright golden centre, indigenous to the island, was produced and laid on the floor in the middle of the ring. The Mulatto then brought forward a stool, covered with a silken flag of three colours—blue, white, and red—and placed a square, polished mahogany bow on it, with great respect.

“All is now ready,” said Lemantin; “let those who have not taken the oath stand forward.”

Le Blanc interpreted his words to the Master, and added, “Will you flinch now? Remember—revenge!”

“No! I will take the oath, were it to send me to hell this moment,” replied the Master, eagerly.

“Stand forward boldly then, and do as I

do, and say what I say. I will interpret for you."

The Master walked into the middle of the ring.

"Citizen Diver is ready," said Le Blanc; "he does not understand French, but I will explain everything to him."

"It is well," said all the conclave in reply; "Citizen Le Blanc is to be trusted—proceed."

"You see that lily on the floor, citizen," said the Mulatto, placing his hand on Jack Diver's shoulder, "spit upon it."

Le Blanc interpreted his words. The Master obeyed, although it must be owned with a bad grace.

"Trample it under your feet."

Jack Diver did so with a better will, although he was sorely puzzled to know what all this could mean.

The Mulatto then approached the stool, bringing the Master close to it, and touching a spring, the lid of the box flew open.

Jack Diver started back in astonishment and dismay, for it disclosed to his sight the perfect model of a guillotine with the knife upraised ; the figure of a man, bare-headed, and formed in wax, lay underneath it, with the head resting on the block. The Mulatto touched another spring, and the knife fell. The head of the figure rolled into the saw-dust, which was immediately sprinkled with a red fluid like blood, which spurted from the trunk.

“What does all this mean?” asked the Master, in a shuddering whisper.

“Hush ! you will know directly. Look.”

The figure of a winged female, holding in one hand a peculiar cap, had arisen from the box, and seemed to hover over the guillotine.

CHAPTER VIII.

“LAY your hand on the box, citizen,” said the Mulatto in a loud voice, “and repeat the oath after me.”

The Master placed his right hand on the box as directed.

The Mulatto then proceeded: “I swear, by the guillotine which levels all ranks, that I will be faithful to the cause of liberty, which declares that all men are and should be equal. That, as the only mode of accomplishing that sacred end, is by annihilating and utterly destroying

all tyrants and aristocrats of every race and denomination, I will neither spare age nor sex, I will wade even through seas of blood, until the cause of liberty and equality is triumphant. That, as I have spat upon the lily and crushed it under foot, so will I trample upon the whole accursed race of kings, nobles, and aristocrats; in like manner, as the glorious people have done to the base, dishonoured race of Bourbons, of which this lily is the emblem. That I will cheerfully obey all orders issued by the Chief Commissary of the Convention. That I will be secret, and never betray the fact or purpose of this meeting, or of any other to which I may be summoned, under no less a penalty than death and infamy. All this I swear by the figure of Liberty, and by the guillotine, from whence alone she issues."

Le Blanc translated the oath word for word as the Mulatto gave it, keeping his eye fixed on the Master's wavering countenance.

If the truth must be told, Jack Diver, un-

principled and scoundrel as he was, by no means either understood thoroughly or relished this oath. It was far too un-English and blood-thirsty for his nature ; and could he have retracted with safety, he would have readily done so ; but it was now too late. His irresolution, however, did not escape the Mulatto's keen eyes ; for, turning towards the Master his malevolent countenance, to which a fierce scowl added a truly diabolical expression, he shouted out in a savage tone, "Swear !"

"Swear !" whispered, like a low echo, the musical voice of Le Blanc, in the Master's ear.

"Well, if I must, I must," responded the entrapped Master ; "but, curse me, if I like it at all."

He placed his hand, however, on the box, and took the oath as required, with a mental reservation to get out of this scrape by going on board again as soon as he could.

"*C'est bien !*" said the Mulatto, holding out

his hand to the Master; “ *tu es, alors mon frère !*”

Every individual in the assembly who could stand, followed his example, repeating the same words, with the sole exception of the Chief, who sat quite motionless and still, seemingly abstracted, and regardless of everything that was going on.

The Mulatto again touched the spring; the figure of Liberty disappeared; and after carefully covering the box with the silk flag, the table was removed, and placed in a corner of the room.

“ And now to business,” said Le Blanc, waving his hand for the rest to be seated, and addressing the assembly :

“ Brother citizens, we are met together here to discuss the means by which this beautiful island is to be rescued from the fangs of the tyrant George and his miscreant red-coats. I, an unworthy citizen of our glorious Republic,

am delegated by the Chief Commissary, Victor Hugues, now commanding the forces of the Republic at Guadaloupe, to concert and arrange with you, our worthy brethren, the best means to be adopted to secure that object. He has placed at my disposal a body of victorious troops, amounting to about three hundred men ; and he expects that we shall be joined, on landing, by all good republicans, both by those of French extraction and by our coloured brethren, who must all be anxious and ready to be freed from the yoke of these diabolical aristocrats, as well as by the gallant natives, who no doubt are both willing and prepared to emulate, in deeds of arms, their brethren at St. Vincent's, who have already declared for the Republic ; and of this we are assured by the presence of Le Capitaine Baron."

At this direct appeal, the Chief's eyes twinkled with a strange expression, but not a muscle of his countenance moved, and he said nothing.

Le Blanc continued: "Now, citizens, to effect this object, it will be necessary for us to be united, heart and hand; and, above all, that the blow should fall secretly and unexpectedly. The Chief Commissary thinks that it will not be advisable to attack Roseau or Morne Bruce, for they are on their guard there, and our force would be scarcely large enough for a direct attack; it would also afford you no opportunity of joining us. It is, therefore, proposed that we concentrate our force at Marie Galante, and land at Rocroix, or some other convenient spot on the windward side of the island; that we take up a position there, and, when joined by all the well-disposed part of the inhabitants, we shall be able to sweep the few red-coats here into the sea. But, to effect this the more securely, it may be as well to contrive that false information, regarding our contemplated attack, should be conveyed to the weak boy who commands the regular troops. Once make

our landing good, then, bah! the island is our own; and justice, liberty, and equality, for all."

This speech, short and concise as it was for a Frenchman to make, was delivered with great fluency, and with much gesticulation; and it seemed to give great satisfaction to the assembly, particularly as Le Blanc was known to be a trusted emissary from Victor Hugues.

"But it will not be so easy," said Citizen Le Bar, "to convey this false information; and I cannot see, with the force you can raise, why you do not attack Roseau boldly; they have not above a hundred soldiers in all: Morne Bruce once carried, the island is ours."

"I have provided for that," replied Le Blanc, in a half whisper. "What do you suppose I enlisted this *sacré* John Bull for? For love, do you think?"

"No, no," said Le Bar, laughing. "But how, in the devil's name, did you get hold of him? What is he? He looks like a sailor."

“ Why, strangely enough, through Le Capitaine Baron. He is a sailor ; but all’s fish that comes to my net. I never let an opportunity slip ; and when I have a trump card, I play it, and don’t much regard consequences : I never stick at trifles, Citizen Le Bar. But as to attacking Morne Bruce, it is no use running our heads against stone walls, and we should only get hard knocks ; besides, their cursed cruisers might catch us. By landing on the windward side, if we manage it well, there will be nobody to interrupt us, and you will be able to join quietly. What force can you muster, negroes and all ? What says Lemantin ? ”

“ Citizen Le Blanc,” replied the Mulatto, proudly, “ of the coloured people, I can answer for more than fifty ; but, you see, those drunken beasts,” pointing to the negroes, “ they are not to be depended on. However, at the festival of Les Roses and Les Marguerites, I will see what can be done with the drunken hogs.”

“ And of French citizens,” said Le Bar,

“about one hundred and fifty. But there are some of the old families, beasts and traitors that they are, who will not join us—Devrien, for instance.”

“They must die, then,” said the one called Petun, in a hoarse voice, like the croak of a raven chiming in; “they must die, one and all, root and branch; their houses burnt, and their women —”

“Handed over to our tender mercies,” interrupted the Mulatto, with a grin. “I have my eye already on such a charmer —”

A deep, thrilling shudder passed over Le Blanc’s iron frame at these words, a gleam of light flashed from his eyes, and he bit his lips till the blood came; but he said not a word in reply to this horrible speech.

“What’s the matter, brother?” inquired Marinier, who alone had apparently noticed Le Blanc’s confusion.

“Nothing, nothing—I was only thinking how we could communicate with one another

readily. By the bye, have you arms for all? No!—well, that must be provided for. Get your men together, and be in readiness, when called upon. The word will be, ‘*Vive la République!*’ Victor Hugues, it will not be long before you are wanted. I will now go into Roseau, and see how things are going on there. Adieu, my friends, for the present.”

So saying, Le Blanc, taking the Master by the arm, walked coolly out of the assembly; the Mulatto opening the door for them, a sinister smile playing over his face as he did so. He had perceived Le Blanc’s emotion, and he alone knew the cause. As he held the door open, another man glided by him, merely looking him in the face as he passed—it was the Carib Chief.

When Le Blanc had got into the open air, he seemed to gasp for breath, and muttered, as if speaking to himself: “O, my God! my God! it is rarely that I call upon Thee; but this is terrible! I, who in my vanity thought

that I could foresee everything, never to think of this! A band of bloodthirsty, ruthless savages! O, Rosalie! Rosalie! And my oath. Oh, it is horrible—horrible!”

Beads of sweat stood on his brow, and he writhed in agony.

Jack Diver, whose perception was never of the keenest order, could not, in this instance, fail to notice his companion's extreme distress; but, as the whole discourse had been incomprehensible to him, he could not understand the reason of it. He therefore only stared at his friend, whose whole frame shook with a strong convulsive shiver. At last he broke out:

“What, comrade, ahoy! Has Yellow Jack boarded you? What makes you shake this way?”

Le Blanc recovered himself quickly, and said, in English:

“The heat of that room, and the filthy smell of those beasts, quite overcame me. I could not

stand it any longer, and was obliged to run away. But I'm all right now."

"May I never set foot on deck again, but I thought you were in for it."

"So I am," thought Le Blanc, for a moment. But his mercurial temperament soon got the better of his depression.

"All right now, Captain! I've got horses here, and, now that the sun is getting low, we'll have a pleasant ride into Roseau together; and I'll take you to a house on the road where you will get a good glass of sangaree, which I should think you would like, after what you have gone through. You did not seem to relish it much. Eh, Captain?"

"Oh, Lord! I'm parched already!" replied Jack Diver. "That oath was enough to dry one's liver up for many a long day. After all, I don't like blood!"

"Blood!" muttered Le Blanc, with a shudder. "Worse than blood. Sit down in the shade,

Captain, and I'll bring the horses out in a minute."

The stables, or rather what was left of them—for everything was in a dilapidated condition, were situated a few hundred yards from the house in which the assembly had met. When Le Blanc entered them, he found the Carib Chief there before him, with the horses ready saddled. He had changed his feathery head-dress for the slouching straw-hat, and had donned his white frock and trowsers.

"Ha! I am glad you are here, Le Baron," said Le Blanc. "I wanted to speak to you for a moment. Now you have got this man on shore, what do you mean to do with him? I am puzzled, which is not often the case."

"I am going to kill him," replied the Chief, in his own soft, musical language.

"But that will utterly derange my plans. I cannot do without him at present."

"Le Baron will wait until his friend says the

time has come—but he will watch him as the lizard watches the fly upon the wall.”

“I should not think he would require much watching, Baron. How readily the fool jumped at the bait. But you have never told me your reasons for seeking this man’s life.”

“Would he not have lashed the Carib Chief like a common negro, had it not been for him?”

“Whom do you mean?” inquired the Frenchman, eagerly.

But the Carib was silent, and Le Blanc knew it was no use questioning him further on that point, though he continued his interrogatories.

“And who told you that this coarse John Bull, this vulgar, thick-headed fellow, hated the fair-haired youngster at Morne Bruce? You were right, however, and I thank you for the hint.”

“Friend,” said the Carib, placing his hand on the Frenchman’s shoulder, “a Carib chief

has his eyes and ears open, and his mouth shut, and he thinks. You all talk too much."

"Well, it may be so, Baron, but it is our nature—a Frenchman must and will talk. I shall see you again soon, Carib?"

"Yes," briefly responded the Baron.

The Frenchman held out his hand to the Chief, who took it, and then glided out of the stable; but as he passed he whispered in Le Blanc's ear, so low as not to be overheard: "Beware of the Mulatto, Lemantin!"

"Whom does he mean?" asked Le Blanc of himself, as he led the horses out; "and why should I beware of the Mulatto? I wish I had questioned him further; but, peste! it would have been of no use, these Indians are as close as a Parisian head of the police, ay, even as Merlin of Douay himself; but now for this beast of a sailor."

Le Blanc jumped actively on his horse, a good stout, useful beast, brought from the Spanish main, and led the other to Jack Diver, who

climbed, or rather scrambled, into his saddle, after the fashion of those unaccustomed to riding. His hack, however, was a quiet, easy-paced animal, and they jogged on comfortably enough together.

The two did not speak much on the way, for the track was so narrow that they could not ride abreast, and it is doubtful whether either of them noticed the loveliness of the scenery that opened to their view on all sides. Not that the Frenchman could not duly appreciate it, but his mind was pre-occupied. He was horrified at the part he was playing, and already bitterly repented his folly.

We will therefore at once conduct them to the lawn in front of "La Belle Étoile," for so was called the house and estate belonging to Auguste de la Motte Devrien, one of the oldest French settlers on the island.

There was a comfortable, snug look about this house, that spoke of wealth and prosperity, combined with much neatness and good ma-

nagement, qualifications not always met with in the West Indian islands. It was a quadrangular building, low, but covering a great extent of ground. There was no pretension about it, being, as usual, of wood, on a stone basement, hinged outside, roof and all ; the whole painted green, except the roof, which was white.

About half the house only was visible from the front, the back part being screened from the sight by a high thick fence of “ Barbadoes Pride,” with its striped orange blossoms, flanked on each side by a clump of immense silk, cotton, and mangrove trees.

The front, which faced the sea, was protected by a large and deep verandah, the floor of which was of porous brick, kept constantly damp. Along the trellis-work, of fine iron wire, and fantastic pattern, crept a variety of beautiful climbing plants, brought from the continent of South America, and evidently trained with much care. The whole of this

part of the house was closely jalousied, so as to keep every ray of the declining sun from penetrating into the apartments.

Coming up to the stone steps of the verandah, was a lawn of short, crisp grass, in which the close observer would find multitudes of that strange production of nature, the sensitive plant. This lawn sloped downwards for some distance, with a gradual descent towards the sun-lit sea, but at length ended precipitously, so that the waves appeared to roll close underneath it. Dotted here and there, and casting long shadows on the smooth grass, stood a fragrant lime, or umbrageous orange-tree, and occasionally a tall, tapering cabbage-palm, beplumed and spiked, would rear itself against the deep blue sky, standing out in bold relief.

The lawn sloped also, but less gradually towards the south, ending at last abruptly, in a broken, rocky declivity, at the bottom of which foamed, and sparkled, and tossed one of those

beautiful translucent, emerald-green streams, which impart such a peculiar beauty to the scenery of this island: prismatic colours danced and quivered along the whole bed of this lovely rivulet, and at every little fall the sun-rays, meeting the spray against the dark outline of the rocks, formed a miniature rainbow. In the deep little pools, you might see the silvery mountain mullet, glancing through the clear water, as they rose at the numberless flies that sported near the surface. The clack of a water-wheel, mingled with the murmuring of the dashing waters, could be indistinctly heard by the inmates of this pleasant house on a calm, still day, though the intervening high ground prevented the noise from being troublesome.

Along the opposite hill—which rose gradually at first, but towered at length to a vast height, headed by fantastic rocks, from the interstices of which sprang, in endless variety, strange, uncouth, yet picturesque shrubs and plants—were

fields of Indian corn, maize, and sweet potatoes, with a few patches of sugar-canes, now only in their first green youth ; and flanking these, on either side, were coffee plantations, rendered not unpicturesque by the coffee plant's protector, or brother, as it is sometimes called, which shields it from the rough blasts that sweep down the mountain gullies.

Behind the house were numerous offices and cattle-sheds, and a small windmill stood near the well. In rear again of these, was a savannah of guinea grass, extending backwards for nearly a mile ; and then rose the mountains, range above range, until the tops were lost in the whirling clouds collected there by the fresh spring trade-wind. Beautiful butterflies, emperors, sphinges, and moths, hovered about the hedge and the orange-trees ; and every now and then a little glancing meteor of green and gold, with a flame-coloured breast, would dart from one to the other with the rapidity of lightning,

hovering for a moment at some chosen flower, with a rustling, humming sound, then away again so swiftly that the eye could scarcely follow it in its rapid flight. Yet in all this lovely scene one thing was wanting. No song-birds thrilled the air with their sweet melody. A lizard or two scuttled off the posts of the verandah—where they had, no doubt, been watching, with their beautiful round eyes, some unsuspecting fly—as the riders approached the house, their horses' hoofs scarce betraying their presence on the soft elastic grass, except to the keen senses of the lizards.

“Hillo—Pompey, Cæsar, anybody at home there?” shouted the Frenchman, jumping off his horse, and fastening him by the bridle to a ring and hook set in a post, evidently for the purpose.

“Here we are, Captain; come in; no ceremony here, they are all old friends of mine.”

Jack Diver dismounted rather more leisurely, feeling a little stiff after his long ride.

Half a dozen negroes had by this time rushed out and seized the horse, all grinning and jabbering together in French.

“Anybody at home, Pierre?” inquired Le Blanc, in English, of a grey-headed old negro who seemed to be the chief amongst them.

“Ees, Massa Frank—Massa in de house and Misse, too,” said the voluble Pierre, laying a strong stress on the last word. “Young English buckra officer dere too, but he gone now. He speakee de French as well as you, Massa Frank. Ole Pierre hear his own Massa say him ab French blood in de wain—bery ansome, too.”

“’Tis the very man,” whispered Jack Diver to his companion. “He is half foreigner, and has got some cursed long French name tacked to his own.”

“Never mind now, Captain; come in,” replied the Frenchman, though he evidently did not relish this piece of news.

Le Blanc pushed open the door, which was

not fastened, without further ceremony (knockers and bells not being in use in that country), and walked into the house.

It appeared very dark, coming as they did out of the glaring day, but the rustling of a female dress, evidently quitting the room hurriedly, was distinctly audible. When Jack Diver could look round him he found himself in a large well-proportioned apartment, with very little furniture in it: the floor, however, was of highly-polished mahogany, and the walls were panelled with the same. A few old-fashioned though richly-carved chairs, a rose-wood table, and a buffet of the same material with brass feet, comprised the whole of the furniture; but on the buffet were ranged several beautifully-cut glass jugs, filled with dark and amber-coloured fluids, and behind them appeared richly-chased goblets of gold and silver, upon antique shields of the same metals, which served as trays.

Close to the jalousies was slung a fine grass hammock, in which lay an old man wrapped in a handsome silk dressing-gown, with a cap of the same material on his head. His face was thin and of a yellowish tinge, but his features were good and regular. An arm-chair stood close by on which was laid an open book, and some delicate female work was hanging over one of the arms. The careless way in which it was thrown there, showed that the occupant of this chair had been suddenly scared away.

The old man awoke as they entered, and cried out peevishly :

“Rosalie, Rosalie, why do you awake me?” but perceiving the new comers, he rolled himself out of his hammock very actively for an old man—kissed Le Blanc between the eyes, and shook hands with Jack Diver, as he said :

“Aha, mon cher François, c’est bien toi mon fils, I am so glad to see you and your

friend too. What will you take? Rosalie, Rosalie."

The old man called for Rosalie, but we cannot think of introducing her at the end of a chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

PERHAPS Rosalie Devrien, had she always lived in a more temperate climate, would have been even more beautiful than she was. The intensely hot and enervating atmosphere of Dominica (certainly one of the warmest of the Caribbean Islands, particularly on the leeward side, where scarcely a breath of air stirs the leaves, except in the draught of the gullies which run down from the mountains) had stolen some of the richness of her beauty, but had left instead a soft languor on her counte-

nance and in her movements which was perfectly irresistible. Her hair was black as—what shall I say?—for a simile must be found—like a tropical thunder-cloud, while still the red sun shines brightly, was the colour of Rosalie's luxuriant locks. Her long back hair, which, when loose, almost swept the ground, was ingeniously plaited, and interwoven with strings of small seed pearls, and rolled up on the crown of her head. It was kept in its place by a high golden comb, every tooth of which was headed by some costly jewel: over this was loosely thrown a small mantilla of white lace. Her front hair was quite plain, except that two little flat-pointed curls rested on her snowy forehead, and behind each ear hung a corresponding tiny ringlet. Her complexion was pale, too pale, perhaps, for our notion of female loveliness; the intense heat of the tropics had withdrawn from her cheeks the blushing beauty of the rose, but left there the simple purity of the lily. You could not

tell exactly the colour of her large melting eyes —sometimes black, sometimes deep violet-blue, as the light varied. Was it the shadow of the long, fringed eyelashes, or the influence of the enervating climate, that gave to those eyes that soft, voluptuous expression? — her heart was all purity, still they were voluptuous. Her face was small, perfectly oval, and every feature as regular as if sculptured by Grecian art.

If you could find any fault in this lovely countenance, it might be in the want of colour in her cheeks and lips, or perhaps you might say that her arched eyebrows were too strongly marked ; still this very fault might be said, from its contrast, to heighten the pure beauty of her alabaster skin.

Her figure corresponded with her face. She was in stature perhaps a little below that which we consider perfect in a woman ; but her limbs were exquisitely and delicately proportioned, and her bust perfection : indeed, if the truth must be confessed, you could not be long in

her presence without perceiving it; for her dress was scanty, and she wore none of those hateful encumbrances called stays. Her arms were bare, except that round them were twisted bracelets and armlets of alternate gold and coral-beads. Her dress was of black silk, made in the Spanish fashion, fitting tight to the body, without any ornaments whatever : it was cut low at the bosom, and short in the skirts ; but as her feet and ankles, the first clothed in velvet, the second in the finest silk, were unexceptionable, I have no doubt that the young Frenchman thought this a considerable improvement on the dresses he had been most accustomed to ; and indeed she had a right to this dress, for her mother was of noble Spanish extraction. A more highly bred and graceful creature than this lovely girl never entered a room.

Rosalie was not one of those indolent, half-educated, though lovely creoles, who make such pretty playthings for the hour, but whose

utter want of intellectual acquirements so soon dispels the illusion of their charms. She had been educated in a convent, amongst other children of noble birth, until the dispersion of its inmates by the decree of a despotic Republic. She was then removed to London, where she learnt not only those accomplishments for which Englishwomen are celebrated, but also imbibed a taste for literature. There also she received several offers from men well worthy of her, which she declined, nobody knew why.

During the fierce war that raged between kingly England and republican France at this period, her father sustained some severe losses from the capture, by the republican privateers, of the ships in which his produce was embarked, and he was reluctantly obliged to recal Rosalie from England; reluctantly, because, having no thought but for her happiness, he feared that the climate and want of society in the little Island of Dominica, would affect her health and spirits. In this, however, he was mistaken—

Rosalie retained both. She quitted London without regret, for she loved her father dearly ; and there was another reason, which my readers may guess, why she had no objection to the West Indies. She arrived safely at Dominica, and was immediately installed mistress of La Belle Étoile. Her father, though naturally active, and a good man of business, had been rendered indolent by the climate ; and he was delighted to find, in his handsome and accomplished daughter, an able assistant and a capital manager. It was owing to Rosalie that the neatness, and even elegance, of everything about the house and estate surpassed all the others in the island.

The slaves, moreover, almost adored her ; they regarded her as a superior being. Many of them would try to kiss the hem of her garment, as they blessed the hour in which she had come among them. Old Pierre absolutely worshipped her.

When she entered the room, the old man

bade her languidly to do the honours of the house, and retired again to his hammock, saying :

“ I have pressed your cousin and his friend to stay to-night, but they seem unwilling ; try what you can do, Rosalie.”

The two cousins embraced affectionately ; and Rosalie, with a graceful but somewhat haughty inclination, returned Jack Diver’s awkward salutation. The Master, as he himself would have said, was rather taken aback at the appearance of this lovely creature ; and the half bashful, half impudent, manner of his address, caused a smile to wreath itself round Rosalie’s lips. After some conventional conversation, Rosalie said to her cousin :

“ François, it is a long time since you visited La Belle Étoile, would you like to see the improvements I have made ? And perhaps your friend might wish to walk round the estate ?”

Le Blanc thanked her with an expressive look, but Jack Diver declined, saying that he was

tired, and would like to rest himself: in fact, he was so stiff that he could hardly walk. A hammock was soon slung for him, to which he retired, with a cigar and a glass of sangaree, and the cousins went out together. What they said at first, as they looked into each other's eyes, beneath the shade of the old cotton trees, was no doubt thrillingly interesting to themselves, but it would not be to our readers. After some time, Rosalie said:

“And what mad freak, may I ask, are you now upon, my volatile cousin, that you have assumed this disguise? Why I declare you have quite a piratical look. Stay—what is this, blue, white, and red? François, my dear cousin, surely you have not turned Republican?”

“Why not, sweet Rosalie?”

“O, François! had my father seen this. Thank Heaven, the room was dark. The very mention of the tricolor puts him in a fury; what would it be then if he saw you wear it?”

“But, Rosalie, I have indeed adopted it,”

said François, earnestly; “the *drapeau blanc* and the lily are no longer the colours under which the man of France can raise his head. The lily is faded, and the *drapeau blanc* was soiled; it was necessary to find new emblems for La belle France.”

Rosalie Devrien gazed on her lover fixedly, and she soon perceived that, although the latter part of his speech was spoken in a laughing manner, he was really in earnest. She had loved her cousin long and deeply, and she was greatly shocked to learn from his own lips the truth of the rumours she had already heard concerning the line of politics adopted by him. Rosalie was, moreover, rather surprised at the readiness with which he confessed his adhesion to the cause of liberty. Proud and coquetish as she was by nature, to him she had ever been soft, gentle, and affectionate. Her father, a staunch adherent of the unfortunate Bourbons, had imbued her mind with a vague hatred towards everything connected with the Re-

public. This, then, was the first time that her love had been brought in contact with her hate. A struggle was obvious : love at first prevailed ; and she said, in a soft tone of voice, gently pressing her lover's hand :

“ Discard this dress, and come and live with us, dear François.”

“ I cannot, Rosalie : I have taken a fearful oath,” said Le Blanc, sadly.

“ I understand you,” replied the maiden, drawing herself up proudly, “ you have two mistresses—your boasted Liberty and your cousin Rosalie : choose between them. I brook no rival.”

“ Nay, but, my sweet cousin, I am bound by honour.”

“ Honour !” exclaimed Rosalie, contemptuously ; “ honour amongst regicides—amongst ruffians ! whose delight is in shedding innocent blood — who overthrow without re-building ! Honour, François ! That word belongs not to such as they.”

“But, Rosalie, hear me. You, who love the truth, would not, surely, have me break a solemn oath?”

“And does not our holy religion say that such oaths are not binding? My confessor shall absolve you from it, and we can again be friends.”

“Friends, Rosalie! Already so cold a word!”

“Have we not always been friends?” said the maiden, blushing deeply. “Can I say more?”

“Yes; I would have you say that you still love me, Rosalie. Do I not love thee passionately—devotedly?”

“No!” exclaimed the maiden, proudly, her soft eyes suddenly lighting with a bright and even fierce flash. “No! once you said that you did, and I believed you—weak fool that I was—but you have forgotten that the blood of the haughty Spaniard still runs in my veins. I will have no rival—I can bear no divided affection. The man whom I would

love must be mine, and mine only—choose your path—it lies before you.”

“What would you have me do, dear Rosalie?”

“O, François!” replied the maiden, tenderly bending her dark, voluptuous eyes on his; “come and live with us—renounce the men of blood you have associated with, and I will love you so fondly and so devotedly, that you will soon forget the dangerous ties you have formed. Come to us—my father loves you, and will make you his heir; and you and I, in happy union, will cherish his declining years, and, in this peaceful spot, live cheerfully and die contentedly. Come, François!”

“O, Rosalie! why do you tempt me so?—it is cruel! You do not know—you cannot feel what it is to shake off the trammels of slavery; to rise from degradation; from being king and priest-ridden, to become free—gloriously free!”

“Yes; the freedom of savages, who delight in blood!” said the maiden, contemptuously.

“Say not so, Rosalie. The blood that has

been shed has been but for an oblation to reason and liberty. Alas ! why do I say this ? —you will not understand me !”

“ It is true. You have set up your images, and you worship them, and immolate thousands of innocent victims on their altars.”

“ Nay, but, Rosalie, is not liberty alone worthy of all our homage ?”

“ Alas, François ! what you say convinces me more and more that there is a great gulf fixed between us ; for I am assured that you who follow, as you say, the cause of liberty, forsake our holy religion. Oh ! for the sake of her who once taught you those sacred truths, deny this, François. Dear François, say, at least, you are not one of these.”

The young Republican dropped the hand that until now he had held in his, and, with his eyes cast down on the ground, while a tear trickled from them, he said, in a low, mournful tone :

“ I cannot, Rosalie.”

“ Then neither God nor man would sanction

such an unholy union !” exclaimed the maiden, solemnly.

It was a strange sight to see the bold, daring, reckless young adventurer subdued, bowed down, in tears, dejected, humbled by the words of the beautiful girl. Bitterly did he lament the eager haste with which he had entered into the schemes of his superior, Victor Hugues ; bitterly did he regret the enterprise he had undertaken, for his heart was no longer in it : it was with Rosalie. Conflicting ideas passed rapidly in strange confusion through his bewildered mind ; his fearful oath ; the Mulatto’s threat ; the Carib’s warning ; Rosalie’s last words—all rang strangely together in his ears. “ Neither God nor man would sanction their union”—such were the words, spoken solemnly. It seemed as if a decree had gone forth. He knew that Rosalie would not lightly alter her determination, and he loved her. Nor were the maiden’s ideas less confused. What she had said were not words spoken without

thought on the spur of the moment. True, this meeting had come upon her suddenly and unexpectedly ; but she had long wished for it, prayed for it, although she dreaded it. She knew that her cousin had lately enlisted himself under the blood-stained flag of the Republic, yet she hoped that her influence, her presence, might recal him from what she felt to be not only a dangerous but unholy path.

Her pride, and her love for her religion, had carried her through the conversation, but his dejection—his tears—distressed her. Had she a right to reproach him as she had done? And then he had borne her reproaches so humbly, so meekly, so different from what she had expected. It proved that his love for her was sincere and deep, and she, too, loved him. But, alas ! no human being is perfect ; with all this good, this religious feeling, Rosalie was a coquette. Even after the sentence she had passed, and even if her cousin had been indifferent to her, she would not have suffered him

to loose himself entirely from her chains. Who can read a pretty woman's heart?

And there, beneath the shade of the grim old cotton trees, they stood, silently, neither daring to look up—scarcely to breathe, for over both their hearts stole the dim foreshadowings of the future.

The maiden was the first to recover herself, and, holding out her jewelled hand to François, she said:

“Though we cannot be more, let us be friends.”

François remained with his eyes still bent on the ground.

“Listen to me, at least,” continued the maiden, pettishly. “I expect Margaret Gordon here every minute. Had I known that you were coming, I would not have asked her.”

“What is Margaret Gordon to me?” murmured the miserable François.

“Do you not remember her father's unhappy

fate? Beware how you mention the Republic before her. I tell you this to warn you."

"I shall not see her."

"Yes, yes, you will, dear François. I do not see you often, and I cannot let you go so easily," said Rosalie, softly laying her hand on her lover's shoulder. "Besides," continued she, with an arch smile, "I want you to help to entertain the young officer who commands the British troops; he is to dine with us to-day."

"Peste!" muttered Le Blanc, his attention now becoming keenly aroused; "that will never do. How came you to know him, Rosalie?"

"He brought letters of introduction to my father from some old friends of his, who, alas! are now in exile; and he is, as I heard my father say, in some degree connected with our family through his mother; in fact, François, he is another cousin."

"Our meeting would be an unpleasant one. I cannot stay, Rosalie."

“Why not? you are my cousin; that surely would be enough to allay any suspicion, if he entertained any, even if he did not know my father’s politics.”

“But there is also some quarrel between him and the Englishman; they might enter into some unpleasant dispute.”

“Where is your chivalry gone, my cousin? Captain Conway is too much of a gentleman to quarrel before ladies.”

“You have seen this Englishman, then?”

“Yes, he was here to-day. He is very handsome and agreeable, and speaks our language with a true Parisian accent.”

A flush passed over the young Frenchman’s face, as he thought of the reason he had given to Jack Diver for his assumed hatred to Conway. Out of favour as he was with his mistress, here was a formidable rival already in the field, and this rival, the very man of all others the most dangerous to him. Jealousy struck him with

her scorpion sting. He began to fear that his words might be realized—that he might, indeed, be robbed of his mistress by the fair-haired aristocrat. The thought at this juncture was enough to madden him: jealousy is never reasonable.

“I intend that he shall fall in love with Margaret,” continued Rosalie, playfully, little imagining what was passing in her lover’s mind; “and that will be a pretty little romance to get up in this stupid little island.”

“Take care, Rosalie: you are playing with edged tools; these things are sharp, and it is better not to meddle with them.”

“What do you mean, cousin? explain, if you please, your mystery?”

“You know well enough,” replied the Frenchman, pettishly, “that I am no cousin; why do you keep up that farce?”

“Because it is my will and pleasure that you should still be considered so. Why, what is the

matter with you, François? your eye flashes fire, and you rasp your teeth together; what heroic vein are you in now?"

"Rosalie, you will drive me mad," cried her lover; "why did you ask this cursed Englishman here at all?"

"Why did you become a Republican? was it for love of Rosalie? Question for question," replied the maiden, laughing, for she perceived his unreasonable jealousy. "By the bye, now I think of it," continued she, determined to tease him, "there is a great likeness between you two, although the colour of your eyes and hair are not the same."

"Peste!" exclaimed Le Blanc, bitterly: "do you want to throw me off, Rosalie? Has the glove been worn long enough, that you want a fresh pair? Fools that men are, to be put on and off by a pretty woman's capricious will!"

"Ha! ha! there speaks the tyrant man. *He* would be absolute master; the woman must

have no will. But, dear, dear François," continued Rosalie, tenderly twining her arms round his figure, and suffering him to imprint a burning kiss on her pouting lips, "you must not leave me—say that you will not."

The young Frenchman, when their lips met, forgot, in that moment of ecstatic bliss, his purpose and his jealousy. When they awoke from the delicious transport, a slight figure, dressed in a hat and riding-habit, was standing by, gazing affectionately on them.

Margaret, or Maggie Gordon, as she was generally called, although essentially Scotch by name, and in her heart fondly attached to everything connected with the

"Land of the mountain and the flood,"

and more especially to the memory of the unfortunate race of the kingly Stuarts, did not show, either in her figure, face, or speech, that she was derived from northern blood. Her figure, displayed to perfection by her tight-fitting riding-

habit, was on a small scale, but exquisitely moulded and proportioned. Nothing could be more graceful than the fall of her shoulders, her swelling bust, and tiny waist. Her face was oval ; her features small, delicate, and regular ; her eyes were blue as the tropical sky ; and her hair, which clustered in a profusion of ringlets, on each side of her snowy forehead, was of a bright rich golden colour. Her movements were all graceful and elegant, though simple and unaffected. She was nature's own child—nature's, in her sunniest, warmest, gayest mood. There was freshness, youth, and innocence in all she said, in all she did ; and this made her bold, and fearless of danger. There was intelligence in her smile, in the sparkle of her azure eyes, in every gesture, in every movement. Guileless as a dove, she was, in truth, as wise as a serpent. Joyous and light-hearted as she now was, Maggie's youthful history was sad and eventful.

Her grandfather, a cadet of one of the noblest

houses in Scotland, had espoused, at an early age, the cause of the unfortunate James the Second. After the fatal battle of Aughrim, he had succeeded in escaping into France. Finding the cause of the Stuarts hopeless, Mr. Gordon, wiser than the generality of the followers of that unlucky race, having still some remains of his fortune left, devoted himself to mercantile pursuits in that then, as now, famous sea-port, Marseilles, and married, at rather an advanced age, a Frenchwoman of noble birth. By her he had one son, who, following his father's footsteps, acquired a considerable property, and in an evil hour, removed to Paris, but not before he had taken to himself a wife, the daughter of a wealthy merchant at Marseilles.

For many years they were childless, but, at length, the fairy-like little Margaret was born, and great were the rejoicings thereat. Early in that terrible revolution, that shook Europe to its centre, Mr. Gordon contrived to offend one of the principal leaders of the Convention, by

refusing him a loan of money, for which he was denounced as an aristocrat and thrown into prison, from whence he only emerged to place his head under the knife of the ready guillotine. His wife and Margaret, then about thirteen years old, escaped, after many perils, into Scotland, with but little means of subsistence, and sought an asylum amidst Mr. Gordon's relatives. This, at first, was cheerfully accorded to them, but Scotland had become bitterly Presbyterian, and their Papistical ways soon made them many enemies. Poor Mrs. Gordon, whose nerves had never recovered the dreadful shock of her husband's miserable death, could not long bear up against the world. She soon sank under the accumulated trials of poverty, dependence, religious persecution, ill-health, and an ungenial climate, and poor Maggie was left an orphan. Her youth, her beauty, vivacity and gentle disposition were of but little avail to her for the four years she remained in the canny North. Placed under the charge of an

old maiden lady, a rigid, bitter Presbyterian, her quick, youthful feelings were constantly hurt by some biting allusion to her Papistical education, and to her attachment to the exiled race of kings. Now Margaret, even as a child, though simple, was proud—proud of the memory of her parents, sacrificed as victims on the altar of liberty ; proud of her religion ; proud in the consciousness of intellect—and her little heart beat strangely at these insults. Her bright eyes flashed with suppressed indignation when the memory of all she held dear was spoken of disrespectfully ; and in the solitude of her little room, she often shed bitter tears, lamenting her lonely and isolated position. Many attempts were made by the ministers of the kirk to convert her, though she repelled all their efforts with scorn and indignation. But the more she repelled them, the more she was persecuted, and poor little Maggie led an unpleasant life. Still her education was not neglected ; and unhappy as she was, she grew in beauty, grace and

accomplishments until she had completed her seventeenth year ; when an incident happened which changed the whole current of her fate.

Margaret had a vision—at least, she always maintained that her mother really appeared by her bedside on that night, and commanded her to go up at daybreak to the ruins of an old abbey, that stood in picturesque, though decayed, grandeur on a knoll near the cottage in which she lived. Her manner of relating it on that evening was this :

“ On the last night of my seventeenth year, I was lying in bed, thinking upon what the next year would produce, and endeavouring to recall to my mind the fearful scenes I had witnessed, and the troubles I had undergone, and I wept. Suddenly, a pleasant dreamy calm seemed to steal over my troubled senses, and I heard a soft voice whisper : ‘ Dost thou sleep, my child ?’ I could not answer, but, at the foot of my bed, I saw my mother, standing in the same dress she wore on that fearful day, when we fled from

Paris, the same in everything but that her head was bare, and her long golden hair fell loosely over her shoulders. She looked at me with a sweet and tender expression, not mournful, but resigned. A ray of moonlight, that stole through the half-closed shutters, shone upon something that she held in her hand. It was a small silver crucifix, which I recognised as one that she had long lost. She raised it slowly to her lips and kissed it; then, extending it towards the window, as if pointing to the hills, she said, in a low voice: 'Daughter, go at day-break to the ruined abbey.' I would have risen, but I looked, and the ray of moonlight darted farther on. She was gone. Until the grey light of dawn crept along the valleys, I lay awake, thinking on the mysterious injunction, nor for one moment did I hesitate to obey it. Before the sun had dispersed the mists on the heath-clad hills, I arose, and dressing myself as noiselessly as I could, I stole from the cottage unperceived. The morning was calm and

beautiful, and the sky was blue overhead ; but along the clear trout stream, that murmured in its rocky bed through the valley below, rolled masses of white vapour, which occasionally spread themselves over the hill-sides, assuming, to my disordered fancy, strange and fantastic forms, as I ran rather than walked over the little bridge that spanned the stream. The startled grouse arose, scared by my approach, and the frightened sheep wheeled round, and gazed at me as I ascended the hill to the ruined abbey ; but I felt no fear, lonely as the scene appeared. An owl glided away on noiseless wing, and a troop of jackdaws flew screaming away as I entered the ruins. No one had yet been there. I seated myself on a fallen stone, and waited patiently and motionless for the sun to rise above the hills.

“ Near the abbey, there was a small cemetery of consecrated ground, where a few shattered tombstones still stood, and here and there a mound of earth, some evidently of recent con-

struction, showed that it was still used as a burial-place by the unsophisticated inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

“ Suddenly, as if emerging from a grave, the figure of a man, well stricken in years, appeared before me. He stooped down and examined the tombstones one by one, and, at that moment, a ray of sun illuminated a distant hill, and, stealing along the valley, fell on a small silver crucifix which the man held to his lips. I felt no fear—I did not hesitate—for the crucifix was the same. I started out from the ruins, and stood before him. My sudden apparition startled the man, who sprang back, exclaiming :

“ ‘ O, God, it is herself !’

“ Then, perceiving that I was real flesh and blood, and no ghost (for which he no doubt took me at first), he bade me good morning.

“ ‘ Perhaps,’ said I, ‘ I can assist your search, for I am well skilled in the traditions and histories of those that lie here.’

“ ‘Thanks, my pretty maiden ; it is, perhaps, hopeless. I seek the grave of Marguerite Gordon. I have been looking for it for months, but I have not found it,’ said the man, with a voice that filled me with strange delight.

“ ‘It is not here,’ replied I, mournfully.

“ ‘Strange!’ said the man, doubtingly. ‘I was told last night that I should here find what I sought—there is everything the same ; but you—’

“ ‘Who told you?’ I cried, so earnestly, that the stranger started back in amazement.

“ ‘That voice!’ murmured he. ‘Maiden, it was herself, Marguerite Gordon.’

“ ‘And I am Margaret Gordon!’ ”

The rest is soon told : it was her mother’s once-loved, though nearly forgotten, brother who now held her to his breast. He had early emigrated to the West Indies, to seek his fortune, where, in course of time, the wild, improvident, young Frenchman, had settled into the calm money-making merchant, or, more strictly

speaking, planter. He had prospered in that ungenial climate; and though apparently forgetting and forgot, he had at heart never lost his loyalty to his king, nor his love for his sister Marguerite. The cross which had been hers, had been mysteriously conveyed to him by some unknown hand, some time after her death, and it had awakened within him a strong yearning to learn what had become of her. He travelled on over the country, inquiring everywhere for Margaret Gordon, for a long time unsuccessfully; but one evening, when weary and tired out, he was offered the hospitality of a bed, by a small farmer, near the village where Margaret used sometimes to make small purchases. In the house, an old crone looked fixedly at him, and said:

“Ye sould be a Gordon, by your e’e. There’s a bonny lassie waits for ye in the kirk-yard, on the gray muir, since the gloaming. Away now until her. Maggie Gordon she is hight.”

He thought the old woman was mad; but on

inquiry, he found that a Margaret Gordon was said to be living near an old abbey, on the moor. True, he read the old woman's words as if she had meant that the body was buried in the abbey, and he went to find her tomb.

CHAPTER X.

THE dinner-party at La Belle Etoile passed off pleasantly enough. Arthur Conway shook hands kindly with Jack Diver, who, mollified by the sangaree, and conscious of his awkward position, dared not reject the proffered reconciliation. As if out of pique, Le Blanc attached himself to the winning Marguerite, and the dark-eyed creole paid particular attention to the fair-haired young officer. The old planter did the honours courteously, and everything went on smoothly and pleasantly. The dinner was excellent.

There was parrot-soup, turtle from the Bahamas, mountain mullet, and crayfish from the gurgling stream, small black crabs from the mountains, ground doves, ramier, pepper-pot, curried iguanas, and many other strange delicacies. By each plate was a fresh-gathered lime, and the fragrant leaves of that most delicate tree were floating in the finger-glasses. The room was filled with the perfume of fruits and flowers. The dessert was splendid: racy mangoes, guavas, sweet limes, shaddocks, pine-apples, forbidden fruit, pommes d'or, grapes, figs, arbutus berries, and many other delicacies were piled on dishes of beautiful Sèvres china. The wine was deliciously cool; for, although ice was not imported into the islands in those days, old Pompey knew well how to manage that; and the punch, Jack Diver pronounced inimitable.

The evening passed rapidly away; Le Blanc, who had thrown off his masquerade and now appeared dressed all in white, was extremely

fascinating and agreeable. He played on the guitar, sang old French songs, never even alluded to politics, flirted, apparently in great spirits, with Margaret Gordon, and left his Rosalie exposed to the tender glances of our hero. He, flattered by the attention paid to him, and charmed to find two such well-educated and fascinating girls in such a paltry island, seemed determined to enjoy himself. He could not help riveting his gaze on the enchanting creole whose dark voluptuous eyes meeting his, were immediately lowered as if in maidenly confusion. For shame, Rosalie! They talked poetry together, they sang duets, and although the conversation, at times, became general, there appeared an evident tendency to pairing off. Jack Diver and the old planter smoked their cigars comfortably in the verandah, leaving the younger ones to flirt, or sing, or talk, as they pleased.

Treacherous as the air they breathed, treacherous as the painted scenery they gazed upon,

treacherous as the ground beneath their feet, was everything that passed on that fatal evening. But we must not anticipate. The moon has risen above the horizon, shedding her broad pale light along the tranquil sea.

Arthur Conway rises to depart. Rosalie presses him to stay with a winning smile and a soft, speaking glance. He resists the temptation, because he dares not leave his little command, for strange rumours are abroad. A riding party, however, for the next day, to visit the falls of the Roseau River, is arranged, and Arthur Conway and the Master of the transport take leave, the horses having been brought round by the slaves. Le Blanc lingered behind, to say something to Rosalie; what it was, the moon alone can witness, for that uncertain lady was the only one who was present at their parting. As the two riders emerged from the shadow of the trees, there might have been seen a dusky figure, with a gliding, noiseless step, following them at a short distance.

“I hope all animosities are forgotten, Captain Diver,” said Arthur, as he reined in his horse to let that worthy come alongside ; “and that you and your friend will dine with me at our little mess at Morne Bruce to-morrow, after the riding party.”

Jack Diver was startled, and, as he would have said, completely taken aback. Dark thoughts, devil prompted, had been involuntarily suggesting themselves to his heated imagination. The loneliness of the track, for road it could not be called, the deep shadow of the tamarind trees, the fantastic forms assumed by the creeping plants, the sickly light of the moon, and, above all, the opportunity, conjured up in his mind the idea of murder. He had pistols about him, and his enemy was unarmed ; why should he not be revenged ? The perspiration was running off his brow in streams, for the evil spirit was stirring within him, and yet he had no fixed idea. Once or twice he had felt for his pistols, and once he had drawn one

out, but he had replaced it hurriedly with a shudder—the deed was too cold-blooded and cowardly even for him.

Little did Arthur Conway dream of the risk he was running, and as little did the ruffian, who was meditating his death, imagine that a pair of dark, clear eyes were watching every motion of his with a fierce significance.

“Yes—no—I’ll be cursed if I do—that is—” stammered out the Master—“what ! dine with you ?”

“Why not ?” replied Arthur, laughing ; “surely you have forgiven me for interfering about that black rascal.”

“It is not that—but what the devil shall I say to him ? I shall get into a precious mess if I don’t take care,” thought Jack Diver. “I must go on board to-morrow, and look after the loading.”

“You forget that you are engaged to the ladies for the riding party ; and after that, you and your friend can dine with me. Do not

think that it is for a trifle that I am so pressing, I want your advice and assistance, Captain Diver. You can be of great service to me. How many men have you on board the 'Sally?' You are strong-handed, I know, and we shall want every man we can muster."

"What do you want my men for?"

"There's no use asking if they will fight; being British, of course they will. Do you not know, Captain, that there are strong rumours of the French attacking this island? How many men can you spare me, on a pinch? Of course, if it comes to fighting, you will give me a helping hand yourself."

The sound of a horse, coming rapidly behind them, saved Jack Diver from answering. He was, as may be supposed, dreadfully confused by this appeal for assistance; the oath he had taken suggesting itself immediately in a very unpleasant manner. "You need not say anything of this to your friend," continued Arthur, "as I wish to get together as strong a force as

I possibly can without spreading an alarm. There are so many disaffected in this island, that if our preparations reach their ears, we shall be beset with spies, and our arrangements made known to that cunning dog, Victor Hugues. Indeed, I fear we have spies amongst us already; there has been some tampering with the soldiers, but, by Heaven! if I catch any of them, I will hang them up to the next tree, without the benefit or mockery of a trial. Not a word to your friend, Captain Diver—here he comes!”

Gall and wormwood were not more bitter than the young officer's words to the Master of the transport.

Le Blanc cantered up, gaily humming the “Marseillaise.” As he approached them, his horse shied across the track, and nearly unseated him; but the moonlight was playing such fantastic tricks with the broken rocks, the quaint shrubs, and the uncouth cactus plants which twined and twisted and threw their strange arms

into the air against the broad moonlight, that the Frenchman took no more notice of it than by touching the horse with bit and spur. As he rode up, Arthur Conway invited him to join their party at the mess on the ensuing evening, to which Le Blanc readily agreed, to the surprise and dismay of the Master of the transport. When they had forded the Roseau River, which danced and sparkled in the pale moonshine, the party separated, Arthur skirting the town, and cantering along the smooth turf to the foot of the Morne, and the others clattering over the ill-paved, steaming, noisome streets of the town of Roseau.

As Arthur Conway is our hero, we will follow him to his quarters.

Morne Bruce, already so often mentioned, is a spur running out from the mountains towards the sea, on the leeward side of the island, and very nearly equidistant from the north and south extremities. On one side is the valley of the Roseau River, to which the descent is very

abrupt, although the sides of the precipice are clothed with an infinite variety of beautiful shrubs. On the other side, is a deep and rugged ravine, covered with brushwood, and castor-oil plants. The approach to the plateau from the town is by a zig-zag road, cut in the face of the hill. The highest level is about six hundred feet above the sea. Two or three small batteries command the approaches, but it is not regularly fortified. At the lower end of the slope, amidst scattered mangoe and lime-trees, stand a few detached buildings, which are officers' mess-house and quarters. Above them, near the narrow neck of land which attaches the Morne to the mountain-chain, are the mens' barracks, standing on a tolerably level piece of ground. Immediately around is a perfect wilderness of shrubs, but the views are beautiful, and the scenery rich and varied. A few sentries were stationed at intervals on the Morne, their bayonets glancing in the moonlight.

Arthur Conway, giving his horse to a ser-

vant, threw himself on a bench in the verandah of his quarters, and gazed on the loveliness of the night.

Night in the tropics is very different from night in green old England. There, the silence may be occasionally broken by the bark of a dog, the screech of an owl, or the honeysuckle flapping against the casement; but, in the tropics, as soon as the sun has sunk beneath the glowing horizon, the air is alive with sounds from the deep boom of the huge crapaud, to the shrill twee-twee of the large purple lizard. The night-wind always seems to sigh mournfully. Insects go humming and droning about, the knocker knocks, the teasing cricket chirps shrilly, mosquitoes—bores in miniature—burr in your ear; there is no rest—no peace. The insect world is in a state of frantic revelry, and, to accompany them, you get into a fury, and perhaps a fever.

And what were Arthur Conway's thoughts as he sat in the verandah, gazing on the moonlit

sea? Were they wandering back amidst the fine old oaks of Morley, with the gay, the laughing Edith by his side? Was he brooding over his changed fortunes? Was he devising how, with his small force, he should meet an attack from the French?

Oh, no! his thoughts were full of the fair-haired Margaret. True, he had talked and flirted with the violet-eyed maiden—how could he help it? She attached herself to him, and the blushing, blue-eyed fairy had rather avoided, than sought his society. Yet, strange to say, he remembered all she did—all she said; every tone was recalled to his imagination. Her tiny figure, her sweet blue eyes, and silky, golden hair, were all there, distinct and visible. Her strange history—for she had told it on that evening—had interested him deeply. He sympathized with her, and now he felt that, had he not loved Edith, Margaret Gordon would have kindled in his breast the spark of love.

And Edith had spurned and rejected him,

because he was no longer the owner of Morley—so he thought. His heart was still full of burning indignation. The wound was rankling—festering—in truth, destroying him, secretly—subtly. Were all women coquettes, jilts, pretty things without hearts? Edith was one—Rosalie Devrien was one. Was Margaret Gordon also? He would see. Dangerous resolution! There could be no risk in making the experiment. If she were but a coquette, no mischief was done; and if he found her heart true and loving, he was independent, and he would marry her, and forget in her arms his love for Edith.

Poor Arthur! He was very young, and he knew not yet the power of first love. He was not one of those who feared the ridicule of his brother officers. They might laugh away—what cared he for them? Then, although Margaret Gordon lived in such a paltry island, she had been well educated, and was of good, if not of noble, extraction. And then came the

horrible, the soul-harrowing thought, that he—he—Arthur Conway—was what? a dishonoured, a degraded being, an outcast from society, a bastard! Had he not acted in a cowardly manner, suffering his mother's good name to be tarnished so easily? Had he fought manfully? No; he had run away almost without a struggle, simply because he had been jilted by a coquette.

The rattle of a firelock sounded through the stilly night as a sentry challenged:

“Who goes there?”

There was no answer. Again all was still. Presently, Arthur heard a slight rustling amidst the bushes in his little garden, and a dusky figure, nearly naked, stood in the shadow of a huge banana, and beckoned to him with his hand. Arthur Conway started at this strange apparition, and was about to call out; but the figure made a gesture of silence, throwing his hands up, to show that he was unarmed; he then advanced slowly towards the verandah, with a noiseless step.

Arthur suffered him to approach, as there was evidently nothing hostile in his movements.

The man pointed to the door of Arthur's quarters. Our hero mechanically arose, went in, and the dusky figure followed him, looking restlessly round to see that there was no one else there.

"We are alone," said the young officer. "You may say what you want, without any fear of our being overheard ; but wait till I light a candle."

"Me got Alguna cosa hablar, Englees Capitan," replied the man, in a low, soft, musical voice, but in a strange compound of languages. "No want lumbre moon dat bastante."

This preliminary address was enough to puzzle our hero, who now looked with unfeigned curiosity at the man's swarthy countenance, on which a straggling ray of the moon darted through the half-closed jalousies.

"You not sabe me ?—dat serange !"

“ I think I do ; and yet —”

“ Great big batteau—el Capitan go for flogge—Official Inglis say no—big poisson, vat you call shark fees come manger—India man swim—dive. Go on de tierra. Him sauvé—now you sabe ?”

“ Yes, I know you now. You are the man the Master of the ‘ Sally’ was going to flog ?”

“ Si, Señor, dat true.” Here the man drew himself up proudly. “ Me Capitan Baron—what you call Chef des Caraibes.”

We have taken the liberty to give so much of the conversation in the *lingua Franca*, then used by the Caribs, but as it would be tiresome to our readers to continue it, we have translated the rest into such plain or hyperbolical English as suits the conversation.

“ The Carib Chief is very welcome,” said the young officer, impressively, after a short pause, for the news of the revolt of that race against the British authority at St. Vincent was known

to him. "Will the Captain Baron drink King George's health in some eau de vie?"

"Le Capitan Baron will. He is grateful."

The young officer produced some brandy, and the Carib tossed off a large glassful without a wink, and placed the empty glass on the table, with a deep sigh of satisfaction, merely saying :

"That is good!"

"The Captain Baron wishes to speak some words to the English Captain," said Arthur. "Will he say what it is?"

"Mayboy has told his brethren at St. Vincent to fight against the English—that is bad. The Caribs of Dominica will fight for King George—that is good!"

"Yes, if he is to be trusted," thought the young officer, "this is good news indeed!"

The Carib continued :

"The old women of his tribe scream in his ears : 'Kill the English !' but the Captain Baron

says, 'No !' English officer saved his back from the whip—he is grateful."

"The English Captain will be very glad if the Carib Chief will assist him ; his men are few, and his enemies many."

The Carib Chief waited until Arthur had done speaking, and then said, after a short pause :

"Listen. The black ants and the white ants conspired together to turn out the red ants from their nests, and then to kill them all. They called into their council a wasp and a red ant chief, who was a traitor. They met, and all took an oath but the wasp. The wasp wished to sting the red ant traitor to death, but the chief of the white ants prevented him, saying that the red ant was wanted. The wasp heard all that was spoken, and flew to warn the chief of the red ants, whom he loved."

"I wonder whether he is to be depended on?" muttered Arthur: "I must try him further.

Can Le Baron remember what was said in the palaver?"

"Yes; the Carib never forgets what his ears drink in. The white ants of Guadaloupe are to come in ships to Rocroix, from Marie Galante, and the white and black ants of Dominica are to rise and help them to destroy the red ants; but the wasps will assist the red ants."

"Will the white ants swarm in great numbers?"

This was rather a puzzling question to the Carib, whose powers of computation were limited; but he soon brightened up, for he remembered the words Le Blanc had used, so he said:

"Le Blanc say about three hundred soldiers come from Guadaloupe."

"And who is Le Blanc?"

The Carib Chief was silent.

"Where is Rocroix?"

The Carib pointed towards the north-east.

“ Can Le Baron guide the English Captain there ? ”

“ When the time comes, he will. ”

“ Will the Carib Chief tell the English Captain who the red ant traitor is ? ”

There was a sudden flashing of the eye, and a quivering of the muscles on the Carib's face, but he did not reply. This time the young officer repeated the question.

“ The wasp will take care of the red ant traitor, as the spider keeps the fly until he is hungry : the fly is in the web, and he cannot escape. It is good. ”

Again Arthur Conway pressed the Carib to tell him who the traitor was ; but had he known the native character better, he would not have wasted his breath in questions which Le Baron did not choose to answer. The Carib was silent.

“ Has the Chief anything more to tell the English Captain ? ” said Arthur, somewhat impa-

tiently, for he was rather provoked at the man's silence.

"Marinier is a bad man."

"Ha ! that is the man who they say has been tampering with the soldiers. Does the Captain Baron know who this Marinier is ?"

"Marinier is a stranger ; he does not belong to Dominica. It is late ; Le Baron must go."

"Will not the Chief taste the eau de vie again ?" said the young officer, pouring out a glass, and offering it to the Carib, perhaps with a hope that the spirit might make him more communicative ; but the Chief drank it off, said that it was good, and raising the young officer's hand to his lips, glided out of the room, and in a moment was lost amidst the wilderness of shrubs.

Arthur Conway did not attempt to oppose his departure, but undressed himself quietly, and threw himself on his bed, drawing the mosquito curtains around him, to keep off those

horrid bores. But some hours passed before sleep visited him.

There was, indeed, much to keep Arthur awake. The Carib's information, although rather vague and unsatisfactory, was not to be doubted or despised. Conspiracy, treachery, were abroad. The power of Victor Hugues was considerable; he had gained several advantages over the English, and being a bold and enterprising man, he would not hesitate to make a dash at a British island so slenderly guarded. Proclamations and circulars, emanating from him, had been distributed over the island: that was a serious subject, too. Possibly the batteries of Fort Charlotte and Morne Bruce might protect Roseau from a direct attack, if the number of assailants was small; but they might land anywhere they pleased.

The British settlers and merchants would no doubt form a formidable and trustworthy militia, and they must be called upon immediately; but what part would the negroes, the coloured

people, and the foreign settlers take? Liberty and equality were the watchwords of the Republicans; the slaves would instantly rise to throw off their yoke, and then what horrors would ensue! Who was Le Blanc? who was the English traitor? and who was Marinier? Some vague suspicion crossed his mind that the young Frenchman he had seen at La Belle Étoile was concerned in this conspiracy; but that suspicion was quickly banished, when he remembered the society in which he had met him. Rosalie, too, had called him her cousin, François Devrien; and the old planter was a stanch admirer of the Bourbons.

Marinier, however, must be watched. He would send a trusty soldier down to Roseau, to see if he could discover who and what this Marinier was. Every precaution must be taken against surprise. If he could see the Carib Chief again, he might be made useful as a watch upon the other party; but Arthur well knew that it was useless to look for him, if he did

not wish to be found. The vague hints which the Carib Chief had thrown out about the traitor being his personal enemy, coupled with Jack Diver's confusion when asked to dinner, and to give his assistance, might have created suspicion, had not the young officer been impressed with the idea that no Englishman could possibly be a traitor to his country.

“The friends of the people” were scarcely known to him, even by name; his mind had been too much occupied with other things: yet suspicion, vague and uncertain, haunted him; for young as he was, he had already learned to suspect. He could not bring himself to forego the anticipated pleasures of the riding party. Margaret Gordon would be there; he would cultivate her acquaintance; and thinking of her sweet voice, her speaking eyes, and golden hair, he fell asleep—to dream of Edith.

CHAPTER XI.

LE BLANC and the Master of the transport rode boldly through the silent town until they reached the market-place. When they arrived at the farthest corner, they turned down a narrow street leading towards the sea. Le Blanc then looked round to see if any people were still loitering about, and having satisfied himself that not a soul was visible, dismounted, and told Jack Diver to do the same. Then, taking his horse by the bridle, he led him down a narrow, covered passage, dark as pitch,

groping his way until he was stopped by a door, which was fast.

“*Sacristie!*” muttered Le Blanc, between his teeth, as he knocked at the door with a peculiar rap. “I hope there is some one here to receive us, I don’t want to spend the night in the open air. The very streets smell of the accursed vomito.”

Apparently, a shower of rain had fallen in the town, although not a cloud had obscured the sky; for there was a dank, earthy, sickening steam rising as if out of the very hearts of the stones, so powerful was the night dew.

A faint light, however, soon gleamed through the chinks of the door, and a faltering step could be heard crossing the paved yard inside.

“Who dat?” said a small squeaking voice, somewhat between the croak of a raven and the scream of a parroquet.

“It is I—Le Blanc—come, be quick, El Mono—open the door and let us in.”

“Who dat? You be berry imperent fallow call me El Mono.”

“Don’t you know my voice? It is I—Le Blanc. Open the door, you old fool.”

“Know you berry well—but why you call me El Mono, eh? Why you call me ole fool, eh?”

“I’ll call you what you please, only open the door and get the horses in.”

“Dat not do.”

“Eh bien, then; citoyen maitre de dance, Auguste Pierrot, will you do me the favour to open the door?”

“Ha, ha, ha,” screamed the parrot-like voice, as a key turned in the lock, and the door was pulled inwards on its rusty hinges.

Le Blanc led his horse into the court-yard, and was closely followed by the Master of the transport. As soon as they had passed, something that stood behind the door, shut it, turned the key, and, drawing back the shad

threw the focus of a dark lantern on the forms of the men and horses. In the dense darkness in which the thing stood, it was difficult to distinguish whether it was a man or a monkey, and even on a closer and clearer inspection, it would have been no easy task to determine his species, but for the shrill parrot-like voice that issued from his lips.

This creature was not above four feet and a half in height, but held himself very upright for an old man (he was nearly eighty). His colour was black, rusted by age; his eyebrows were perfectly white, and two or three twisted woollen patches of the same colour were dotted on his skull; he had no forehead; his bleared eyes were nearly lost in his head; his nose, with huge, gaping nostrils, was merged in his cheekbones, but his nearly toothless mouth, with great, flabby lips, extended from ear to ear;—and such ears! they flapped like an elephant's. The most prominent feature, however, was his

chin, which stuck out nearly at right angles from his nasty, scraggy, bare neck. His long, bony arms nearly reached his great, splay feet, in the middle of which were stuck his thin, knifey legs. His whole habiliment was a striped, blue cotton shirt.

This thing now came forward, as if satisfied with his scrutiny, and, making a very elaborate bow to Le Blanc, said, with a grimace impossible to describe :

“How you do, citizen? Vil you do me the onor to inderduce udder citizen?”

“Are you gone mad, Auguste? Put the horses in the stable, and then show us a light up stairs.”

“Hi—hi!—what dat? Youself mad! We all broders now—all equal.”

This self-elected equality amused Le Blanc exceedingly. There was something so irresistably comical, and yet so degrading, in this withered, ape-like, but vain thing, fraternizing,

that, with the laugh which he could not altogether suppress, there mingled a sigh of inquiry :

“ Are all men equal ? ”

The wizened negro perceived the laugh, and understood it. But, treasuring it up for a future occasion, he said nothing then. Taking the horses by their bridles, he led them into a stable already nearly filled.

Le Blanc, bidding Jack Diver follow him, groped his way along a boarded passage, up a flight of rickety stairs, and threw open a door.

Three men were seated at a table : two of them were smoking and playing at cards ; the third, shading his face with his hands, was reading a letter. Before the players were some bottles and glasses, and, flanking these, a pair of pistols. One of these was immediately snatched up, cocked, and pointed at the intruders.

“ Hein ! ” said one, lowering the muzzle.
“ Is that you, Le Blanc ? Excuse my rudeness.”

“There is nothing to excuse, my dear Le Bar. If you had pulled the trigger, it would have been *bien autre chose*. But why have you these weapons so handy?”

“Not three minutes ago, the door was gently pushed half-open, and some one looked in,” replied Le Bar. “We all three ran out to see who it was, but, *sacristie* ! we found nobody ! and Pierrot declares, on his honour as a French citizen, that he never unlocked the outer gate. So I got the tools ready to mark him, should he come again.”

“It must have been the wind, or the cat, or El Mono himself,” said Le Blanc, carelessly, throwing himself on to a sofa, which creaked and groaned, and threw up a cloud of dust as he did so. “What’s your game?”

“Beggar my neighbour, I should think,” said the man who was reading the letter, in a low voice, and in English.

“Ha ! Marinier, *mon cher*, is that you ?

Come here, and sit beside me; I want to talk to you."

This Marinier immediately did, and, crumpling up the letter, put it into his pocket.

"Yes, I want to talk to you about this youngster at Morne Bruce—there is more in him than I imagined. But first let us get rid of this *sacré* John Bull sailor."

"There is a hammock slung in a room inside there. He can turn in, if he likes."

Jack Diver had sat down, and was sulky and silent, for his head ached, and his eyes were heavy and bloodshot; but, as he had drunk pretty freely of the punch at La Belle Etoile, and had been exposed to the sun during the heat of the day, this was neither strange, nor anything to be frightened at, so he took advantage of the offer, and rolled himself up in the hammock, where we will leave him, for the present.

Marinier, after putting him to bed, returned, and, sitting down on the sofa by Le Blanc, they

conversed together in a low tone, so as not to be overheard by the players.

“ You know more about this youngster than any of us, Marinier. How came you to find out that he had robbed this coarse sailor of his mistress ? It is true, however, and that is how I hooked my fish—not that I think he is worth much, now we have caught him.”

“ Psha ! is it any wonder that a girl should prefer a handsome, fair-skinned youth, to a coarse, weather-beaten rascal ?”

“ Did he really seduce her ?”

“ No, no, the girl loved him, *voilà tout*, and we took advantage of the knowledge to play a little game of our own. Jealousy is a good tool.”

“ You have a particular reason then for wanting to ruin this young Englishman ?”

“ Not I ; I only obey orders.”

“ Strange enough,” said Le Blanc, musingly.

“ Another man told me that this sailor Captain

hated this young officer. Could he have found it out by instinct?"

"And who is this other?"

"The Captain Baron, the chief of the Caribs; no less. It is certainly an odd coincidence."

"But this strange savage has a motive, no doubt, for bringing this man on shore?"

"Yes, he wants to kill the sailor."

"And why?"

"Because this rough Captain wanted to flog him; had him tied up on the deck of the ship, where I had sent him to look about."

"And how was this flogging prevented?"

"I don't know; the Carib would not tell me."

"I see it all. It is this youngster who has saved the Carib's back from the lash. Take care that this savage does not play us a trick: I would not trust him too far."

"The Caribs have risen against the English at St. Vincent, and they hate them in this island

as well as we do. The Caribs have never forgotten nor forgiven the English seducing a number of their people on board one of their ships and carrying them off as slaves."

"And I would do the same with this savage."

"That would be both unjust and cruel."

"But it would be politic."

"What! enslave him; punish him on bare suspicion, of the most vague and uncertain kind?"

"The end sanctifies the means."

"One would think you were a Jesuit by your arguments."

"I was one."

Le Blanc started at this cool admission, and frowned abruptly.

"What! a Jesuit taking an oath, and conspiring with Republicans, to overthrow the allies of the Legitimists! Impossible!"

"Hush! they will hear us," quietly replied

Marinier. "As I said before, the end sanctifies the means. I obey my orders simply, and do not judge of their merits."

"And your orders are to ruin this young officer at any cost?"

"Yes, to thwart him in everything—to injure him in his reputation—in fact, to destroy him alive; and if that cannot be accomplished, he must die."

"And you have followed him here?"

"Yes, I have come all the way from England, to this dangerous climate, for the sole purpose of effecting his ruin."

"This I cannot understand."

"No, it is beyond your comprehension yet; but you will help me?"

"I hate treachery," said Le Blanc, impatiently, shrugging up his shoulders.

"What are you doing here then?"

"All's fair against a declared enemy; besides, you don't suppose I came only to raise this vile conspiracy?" said Le Blanc, frankly.

"The villainous brutes! I wish I had nothing to do with it. But, like you, I only obey the orders of my superior."

"And that superior is Victor Hugues?"

"Yes, for the time being."

"Take care, Le Blanc, take care. Swimming eyes, voluptuous kisses, warm sighs, twining arms, silky tresses, are dangerous snares for the young and unwary, but excellent tools for the wise and cautious."

"What do you mean?" said Le Blanc, almost savagely.

"That your love for the violet-eyed daughter of the old Legitimist, at La Belle Étoile, is known. You have just come from thence. The Republican dined with the Bourbonnois."

"Who told you this?"

"No one—I guessed it."

"This is very extraordinary!"

"Not at all. Your abrupt departure from the meeting, after a little speech made by the

mulatto, Lemantin, made me think ; and, after you were gone, I pumped the beast. Somehow or other, he knows of your attachment. The rest I guessed by your not coming here sooner. *Apropos*, he is jealous of you—he too loves your Rosalie !” and Marinier watched, with his small, keen, black eyes, the effect of his words.

“He ! that brutal ogre ! that monster presume to lift up his bleared eyes to the queenly Rosalie !” cried Le Blanc, savagely.

“Hush ! What are you talking about ? Surely all men are equal, in your creed ?”

“And the Carib, too, told me to beware of the mulatto, Lemantin,” continued Le Blanc, without heeding the interruption. “This is singular—very singular !”

And suddenly a thought occurred to him—a strange thought, too — on which the young Frenchman founded as strange a resolution.

“He is easily roused—he is not a Republican at heart—jealous, in love, ardent, young—what a capital tool !” thought Marinier. “Did he

not say that there was more in this young Englishman than he imagined? He must have dined at La Belle Étoile too. If I can but make him jealous, *c'est une affaire finie*. Now for a slight thrust to find his guard."

"This English officer is very handsome, is he not?"

"Yes," replied Le Blanc, frankly.

"Young as he is, he had, in England, already acquired the reputation of a lady-killer."

"Well! what of that?"

"Oh! nothing; but as he, too, dined at La Belle Étoile to-day, he must have seen your Rosalie."

"*Sacristie!* you know everything, citoyen!"

"As I have to report to England everything concerning this youngster, I am obliged to watch and glean what I can concerning all he does. It was from you that I ascertained the fact of his having dined there."

"How so?"

“You admitted it. But never mind. Did he pay much attention to your mistress?—don’t frown, I have my reasons for asking it.”

François rapidly ran over in his mind the events of the evening. The disagreement with his mistress annoyed and vexed him; he could not forget her words :

“Then neither God nor man would sanction such an union !”

The evident attention paid by her to the English officer had not escaped his notice; nay, he had seen their eyes meet. But then he had been flirting with the fair-haired Marguerite, and Rosalie might have done it to pique him. Besides, their parting had been a tender one. How could he then be jealous? Again, although Arthur Conway was his enemy, opposed to him in every way, he had, even on their short acquaintance, taken a strange liking to him. Nothing would give him greater

pleasure than to meet the English officer face to face in the open field, but to act treacherously to him individually was not in accordance with his daring and adventurous character. Marinier had quite mistaken his man. A frank and chivalrous disposition, although employed on such a dangerous mission as the young Frenchman now was, is often a match for cunning. Frankness often stops on the brink of the precipice, but cunning overreaches itself, and falls.

Marinier had made up his mind to use Le Blanc as a tool against Arthur Conway, having already, through his means, succeeded in entrapping Jack Diver as an auxiliary. Le Blanc had jumped at this bait readily enough, because being deputed by Victor Hugues to raise the island against the British Government, and to take it, if possible, by any means, he had no scruple, on the principle that all is fair in war, in seducing the Master of the transport from his allegiance, that he might, through him, obtain

intelligence of the movements of the small British force then on the island, and by giving false information of their own premeditated attack, so as to get the British regulars to march to a part of the island where they would find no enemy.

During the pause which ensued, before Le Blanc replied to the Jesuit's question, three slight though peculiar raps were given on the door. At the word "*entrez*," the Carib glided noiselessly into the room, seated himself quietly in a corner, filled his pipe, and commenced smoking. No one took any notice of him, for he was a privileged person, and could come and go as he liked. Marinier, however, looked at him with a displeased countenance, but immediately resumed his conversation with Le Blanc, forgetting that the ears and eyes of a savage are much keener than our own, although at the time his senses may appear to be utterly abstracted.

“You do not answer, *mon cher*,” resumed Marinier. “Is it possible that this Captain Conway has already begun his old tricks again? He cannot cross a pretty woman’s path without trying his power of fascination on her and seducing her affections, young as he is.”

“In this case, Marinier, he will not succeed.”

“How can you tell? few women, they say, can resist him.”

“With Rosalie he will fail, I tell you.”

“Why so?”

“Simply, because she already loves your humble servant.”

“You are not jealous, then?”

“I jealous! ha, ha!” and the young Frenchman laughed loudly and merrily. “I jealous! what a joke! I, whose motto is *vive l’amour, vive la bagatelle*, although for my own amusement I am engaged in a conspiracy. No, I tell you no; she loves me, and I love her.”

“But you will have to leave this island soon,

and then she will be fully exposed to his fascinations."

"Wrong again, *mon prêtre*, we shall soon be masters here."

"But, Le Blanc, listen to me: suppose by any chance you fail—you are discovered—taken, what will be your fate? and her's? You will die, and she will lie in his arms; her warm kisses will be breathed on him, those living charms which where your own will be your enemy's. Yes, I see them now clasped in each other's arms, the happy bridegroom and the blushing bride, and you a mouldering corpse, forgotten and despised. Will you let these things be?"

A visible emotion passed over Le Blanc's face at this picture, but he said, simply:

"I do not know, Marinier, what motive you have in destroying this young Englishman, but I can as yet (these words were pronounced slowly and with a marked emphasis) feel no

jealousy towards him, although he is my enemy."

"May you not have cause to do so! still I warn you that he is a dangerous man with women."

"It may be so, and I will watch him closely."

"And if you discover anything?"

"I will do as the Carib yonder said he would do to his enemy—I will kill him."

"Nay, we do not want his death."

"What then do you want?" exclaimed Le Blanc, with surprise.

"Infamy—misery—in short, a living death."

"You must have some terrible motive, far beyond my comprehension, in this. I can understand compassing his death, but to destroy him living I cannot."

"I have no motive—I do but obey orders."

"You want to persuade me, Marinier, that you are but a blind instrument; why then

did you endeavour just now to cause my jealousy?"

"I did but try you—you are not jealous, and can trust your Rosalie. Well then, as it is your object and mine to get this young Englishman out of the way, so that he may be taken unawares, let your Rosalie encourage him—let him bask in the sunshine of her eyes until the time comes; he will desert his post, he will be disgraced, he will be jilted, and perhaps be taken prisoner."

"It is a dangerous and unpromising experiment," replied Le Blanc, musingly. "The charmer may be charmed. Am I so mad as to leave a warm-hearted creole girl to the tender sighs and glances of a red coat; good-looking, young, and as you say, a lady-killer, without being tolerably certain of gaining some great end by it?"

"You *are* jealous then," said Marinier, with a bitter sneer, "and refuse your assistance to one who has already served you?"

“I am not jealous, *mon prêtre*, nor do I refuse you, but I should like to consider it a little more; and, *apropos*, how have you served our cause?”

“By already having corrupted the fidelity of some of the soldiers, and soon I hope to have more. I do not want for money, and use it freely.”

“Stay, Marinier, before we go any further, will you tell me this young Englishman’s history?”

“Not to-night, Le Blanc, not to-night; I must leave you now, it is getting very late. What are your plans for to-morrow?”

“I am going on a riding party to the falls of the Roseau River with Mademoiselle Devrien, this young Englishman, and a fair-haired girl, called Marguerite Gordon.”

“And after that?”

“I dine at Morne Bruce, with this rough sailor.”

“You will have a capital opportunity to-

morrow—think well on what I have said ; it is easily done, and there is no risk.”

“ I will think of it to-night. How close and sultry it is. The sailor must be nearly suffocated in that little room with the door shut. I'll go and have a look at him—*au revoir*, Marinier.” Having said this in his careless off-handed manner, Le Blanc, passing the card-players, who were both nodding over the table, went into the den where Jack Diver was lying in his hammock. He was certainly asleep, but was tossing about restlessly and moaning. A dark flush was spread over his forehead and face, and he breathed heavily. Le Blanc looked at him for a minute attentively—then felt his pulse, and put his hand on the sailor's naked breast.

The young Frenchman said nothing, but turned away with a shake of the head, and went back into the outer room. Marinier was gone. Le Bar and Petun were fast asleep, but

the Carib sat in the corner, in exactly the same attitude. Le Blanc went up to him, and said in a low tone :

“Le Baron, the vomito is about to rob you of your victim. Go and see.”

The Carib arose slowly, took up a candle, and went in. It would have made a fine study for a painter.

The dark form of the savage, standing there immovable as a statue, shading the light with one hand, and watching with his bright glistening eyes the countenance of his enemy.

The Master started in his sleep, as if conscious of the presence of his foe, and muttered, incoherently :

“Tie him up Andrews. Lay on—one ! Oh ! that oath—that oath ! Shall I shoot him ? Thirsty—thirsty !”

Then his eyes opened, red and bloodshot. The Carib blew out the light, and glided out of the room.

"Some drink, some drink!" cried the Master, in a husky voice. "My throat is parched and my brain on fire!"

But no one heeded him.

"He is in for the fever, is he not?" said Le Blanc, as the Carib returned.

"Yes; Le Baron may now go."

"Whither go you?"

"Le Baron is going to the mountains."

"Will you have the canoe ready at the creek to-morrow as the sun sinks beneath the wave? I must return to Guadaloupe."

"The Carib will be there."

So saying, without any further parley, the Chief quitted the room.

Le Blanc awoke the sleepers with the pleasing intelligence that the terrible vomito was in the house. They were at first a little startled, but they were both well-seasoned; and Le Bar immediately said that it would not do to send for a doctor, but that old Pierre was a capital

nurse; and it was soon determined that the sailor should be put in his charge.

The withered old negro was straightway summoned, and the Master placed under his especial care; and, to say the truth, El Mono was no unskilful practitioner in this particular disease, which in many cases is more successfully treated by extreme watchfulness and care, after the burning fever has subsided, than by medicine.

Le Bar and Petun went up stairs to bed, and the young Frenchman threw himself on the sofa; but he did not sleep, for there rose a horrible picture before his eyes—La Belle Étoile in flames—drunken negroes dancing round it, screeching with delight as the inmates fell scorched and bleeding one by one amidst its ruins. Rosalie—his Rosalie—flying, with her long hair loose and streaming in the wind, from a hideous, infuriated, mob of savage negroes, with the mulatto, Lemantin, at their

head. She staggers—she falls, and he not there to save her. All that Marinier had insinuated to him was but as the shadow of a shade, when his imagination conjured up this picture before his eyes, and the reality would come—must come, if the insurrection should take place; and he, her lover, an active promoter of this very thing. Oh, hideous! The blood rushed to his head—his eyes. He sprang from the sofa, and paced the room impatiently.

“I will do it—I must do it!” he said, aloud. “Yet, how can I get it conveyed to him? The Carib? He goes with me to Guadaloupe, and even in that short time, the negroes may rise. Rosalie? No, no: not her—not her. Marinier? He would open the letter. Le Bar—Petun? They would think I was betraying them. Ha! old Pierre shall do it. I will rouse his vanity. No one can suspect him, and I can say to him that it is a communication of importance from the Master of the transport. At all events, I will write it.”

There were writing materials on the table, and Le Blanc sat down, and concocted the following brief, but characteristic, epistle :

“ I am your enemy. I love Rosalie Devrien. I have been warned that, should a rising take place in this island, La Belle Étoile will be attacked by negroes. A mulatto, called Lemantín, will be at their head. Protect her—guard her. I, a Republican and a Frenchman, am obliged to ask this from an Englishman, an aristocrat, and an enemy ; but love overcomes all feelings of pride. It is in vain to seek for me, for when you get this, I shall be far beyond your reach. Should we meet in happier times, I will be your friend. In the meantime, believe me your enemy.

“ FRANÇOIS DE LA MOTTE DEVRIEN.”

When he had finished, folded, and directed it, a sigh of satisfaction burst involuntarily from his lips. He could find, however, nothing

wherewith to seal or fasten the letter, but that did not trouble him, as he had no idea that the negro could, or would read it; so, blowing out the lights, and retiring to the sofa, he put the letter under his pillow, and soon fell asleep.

In about an hour, old Pierre came out of the little room with a candle in his hand; he looked round, and after a short pause began, as most negroes do, talking aloud to himself.

“Hi, dey all gone couchee—wonder if leetle drap ob rum left—ole Pierre see,” and he proceeded to examine the bottles. The noise, half awakening Le Blanc, he turned himself on the sofa restlessly: in doing this, the pillow was displaced and the letter became exposed.

The negro stood quite still, and the young Frenchman soon gave evidence that he was fast asleep.

The wizened old negro stole to his side, and looked for a minute at the handsome countenance of the sleeper with a truly diabolical expression, and muttered: “What now prevent

ole Pierre puttee de knife into dat man. He callee me de ole fool, de monkey ; same time him say all men are broders. Hi—wurra dat—a letter !” and with the curiosity of an ape he stooped down and gently removed the letter and held it to the light.

The sleeper slept on.

“ Capt’n, Capt’n, Con-Con Con-vay—Morne Bruce—Hi, him traider—he callee ole Pierre de fool, de monkey, and him traider—Hi, hi !” He turned the letter round, and perceiving that it was not sealed, continued his mutterings : “ Ole Pierre man ob honour, can’t oben dis.”

Still he twisted the paper round and round. Curiosity so inherent in chamber-maids, monkeys, and negroes, soon overcame old Pierrot’s sense of honour and he opened it.

The sleeper slept on.

The old negro, holding the letter close to the candle, spelt it word by word, commenting on its contents as he read. When he came to the part where it said that La Belle Étoile was to

be attacked by negroes headed by the mulatto, Lemantin, he chuckled, and grinned, and showed his nearly toothless gums. "By golly dat good—see dat dam ole astocrat burn—burn—de coloured bredren dance and sing round de fire—den Obi come fright mulatto away too—black men ab all—white gals ab soft kin. Ah! ah!" Then where the letter ran, "when you get this I shall be far from your reach," he said, "Ole Pierre take dam good care ob dat; buckra afficer not get him at all—ole Pierre get him. Pose I take him now—go up de Marne, see buckra afficer. No—dat not do—poil de fun—no fire—no kissee white gal's lips."

Here the sleeper turned round on the sofa.

"Pose him wake now, missee de letter, what ole Pierre do—muss put him back—marrow marning say go up de Morne get physic from hospittle for sailor man, den Frenchman say—ole Pierre, you is one faidful man, takee dis letter—den he gib me one two dollars, but buckra afficer no get him; dat do berry well,"

so saying, the old negro refolded the letter and replaced it where he had found it, and taking away the candles, he went back into the room where his patient was tossing about and moaning heavily.

CHAPTER XII.

BEFORE proceeding with our tale, it may be as well to give a slight sketch of the Island of Dominica, for insignificant spot as it may appear on the face of the earth, it is nevertheless "beautiful exceedingly." Standing as it does nearly half way between the two rich and lovely French Islands, Martinique and Guadeloupe, it was at the time in which our story is laid a place of some consequence. Emancipation and free-trade had not then cast down and destroyed the fortunes and the energies of the

planters. Thousands of valuable lives were sacrificed and thrown away to retain what we held, to regain what we had lost, and to acquire new possessions. We were successful in the end, as England generally is, but at what a cost? and for what, latter years have shown? Well may these islands be called "Painted sepulchres," "White men's graves." Man, with his murderous engines, destroyeth his fellow-men; the vomito blasts them with its fiery breath; slow creeping dysentery wastes them away; the hurricane, with its awful voice, howls over them; the quivering, rattling earthquake adds to the heaps; the land-crabs, the ants, and the Johnny-crows have feasted well. Yet are they gorgeously painted. Lavish nature, as if in bitter mockery, hath adorned the landscape with grace, with beauty, and with majesty. The lofty mountains rise to the clouds, clothed even to the summits with brilliant-foliaged trees and fantastic shrubs; sparkling streams of emerald-green; foaming waterfalls, rich with prismatic

colours; bright, grassy glades; precipitous, frowning cliffs; lofty palm-trees, slender, tapering, and graceful; massive cotton, mangrove, locust, and bullet-trees of prodigious growth; bamboos tall as the top-gallant mast of a noble ship; spreading sandbox-trees, whose fruit rattles in the wind; the dark-green manchineel, with its lovely apple, the very emblem of the soil and climate—all beautiful to the eye, but at the core full of treachery and poison; groves of citron, lime, shaddock, and orange-trees; rows of sweet fruit-bearing tamarinds lining the margin of the sea; perpetual verdure—ever-varying light and shade; gorgeous flowers; fantastic creepers; terrific thunder-storms; rainbows spanning the valleys all day long; wild broken gullies; sheer precipices; paths winding round the mountain sides, where a false step would hurl the horse and rider five hundred feet down into a sparkling stream. In fact, a chaos of bewildering beauties, of dazzling colours,

of majestic influences, impossible to the painter and utterly indescribable.

Such are some of the characteristics of the sky and scenery of the island in which our story is laid.

* * * *

Arthur Conway rose early, and dressed himself with unusual care. On looking over the sea, he observed a deep purple haze hanging over the horizon. The vessels in the offing loomed larger than usual, and a long rolling swell was breaking against the cliffs, although for many miles out to sea there was not a ripple on the surface of the ocean. Still the trade-wind was whirling the light fleecy clouds against the mountain tops, and the atmosphere over the land was bright and clear.

Arthur had never before risen so early, and although he remarked the peculiar colour and depth of the haze, he saw nothing unusual in it,

but concluded that it was the mist of the morning, which the sun would soon disperse.

His little stable stood just behind his quarters, and he went there to see if his horse was being saddled.

Mention has already been made of a younger Tom Ellam, the son of the gamekeeper of Morley Hall. He had enlisted into Arthur's regiment out of attachment to his young master, as he always persisted in calling him. He was a steady, well-educated young man for his station, and might have been promoted, but he preferred being about the Captain's person as batman; and Arthur, off duty, treated him as an old familiar friend, in whom he could put every confidence.

Young Tom Ellam was in the stable saddling the horse, whose bright shining coat and sleek appearance showed that he, too, was a favourite.

"Ellam," said our hero, as he stood looking

at them, "I want to speak a few words to you before I go out. Tie Tom's head up and listen to me."

"Yes, Sir."

"Have you heard of any fresh attempt on the part of the rebels to seduce the soldiers, by giving them money?"

"Yes, Sir; Tom Connolly—fighting Tom, as he is called—told me that he was in a grog-shop a few days ago, with some more of his kidney, pretty well cut, Sir. Tom, you know, Sir, had been in some of those secret societies in Ireland before he enlisted, and he is, saving your presence, a Roman, and so were the rest of the party. Raw rum, you know, Sir, soon gets into a man's head, be it ever so strong, and they set to discoursing, as Tom calls it, about the wrongs and rights of old Ireland, and such like—more fools they. Then one fellow said how he had been out, and then another, till they got giving signs and words, and such

like, and there was a great row, all speaking together. All this time there was a man sitting quietly in a dark corner."

"Did Connolly notice what this man was like?"

"Yes, Sir, he was sober enough for that. He was a little dark man, with black hair, and sharp, cunning, small black eyes, with a hook nose, and a down look, dressed in rusty black."

"I don't know such a man. Go on, Ellam."

"But I do, I think, Sir," replied the soldier, gravely. "I saw just such a man as Tom describes once at Morley Hall for a few minutes when you were out, Sir; but I should like to see him to make sure of my man."

"At Morley!" replied Arthur, in astonishment: "impossible! You must be mistaken, Ellam."

"Possible, Sir; still I should like to get one peep at him. I am not easily deceived in faces.

I have looked out for poachers too much for that."

"What makes you connect this man with Morley?"

"Why, Sir, after crossing himself, and showing that he was one of them, he began asking questions about you, in particular, Sir. How you were liked; what sort of an officer you were; and such like. Tom, begging your pardon, Sir, said you were too damned high; that you had punished him for no fault; and that he did not care how soon the land-crabs had your body and the devil your soul. Tom didn't mean it, your honour, he only said it to see how the land lay. So the little fellow pulled out a long purse, and ordered more drink. Well, the rum came, and they all got very drunk—all but Tom Connolly. By-and-by, the man says to him: 'I can't think, my fine chap, how you Irishmen, 'specially you who are good Catholics, can fight for the bloody tyrants.'

Them's his very words, Sir. Tom said that he did not know how it was—that he had 'listed when very drunk—that he had tried to slip away once or twice, but that he had always been caught—but, curse him, he would go on the first opportunity. From this the man went on to say that a good deal of money might be made if there was a row, and the men would bite off the balls from the cartridges, and more, if any would come over to the French, or give good information of what was going on up here. Tom listened to it all, and said he would think about it, and see if he could get any to join him. The man then slipped an eight-dollar piece into Tom's hand, and went out."

"And why did not Connolly come and report this to me immediately?"

"He didn't like, Sir; as they were all more or less drunk, and stopped out too late: and it was only last night that Tom told me of it."

"It would have been better had he done so

at once ; but never mind, more, perhaps, may be made of it as it is."

The young officer then proceeded to give Tom Ellam his instructions, which were simple enough, if well executed. He and Fighting Tom were to go down into Roseau that very morning ; they were to call at the grog-shop, and to ask if the man had been there, and to make an appointment with him, if possible. Ellam was then to go round to the storekeepers and tradespeople employed by the military, and to ascertain, if he could, who Marinier was, and with whom he associated. If they could succeed in falling in with the stranger, they were to take any bribe he might offer, and apparently fall into his views. Ellam was then to return to the Morne, to report his failure or success, leaving Tom in the town to be on the watch.

When poor Arthur mounted, he had some scruples of conscience in quitting his post after what Tom Ellam had told him. It was his

duty to watch carefully and to be perpetually on his guard, as treachery was abroad; but the opportunity of so soon again seeing the winning Marguerite was too tempting. No immediate danger was to be apprehended, and he would defer calling upon the officers of the Militia until the following day.

He had not yet learned to sacrifice his inclination to his duty.

Yet it was not without some misgiving, some sinking of the heart, that he turned his horse's head from the Morne and rode slowly down the steep zigzag road that led to the skirts of the town. Once on the smooth turf, however, he threw it off, and cantered gaily along to the appointed rendezvous.

Dashing across the ford he had passed on the previous evening, and scaring away the women and children who were desporting themselves in the clear stream, he reined in his horse under the shadow of a dark red cliff, and looked round. No one had yet arrived.

New as Arthur was to a tropic land, the scene before him was full of novelty and enchantment.

At his feet, jumping and tossing itself over miniature falls, ran the glowing little stream. Hundreds of dusky women, maids and matrons, young and old, naked to the waist, with nothing but a scanty piece of gaudily-striped cotton stuff round their loins and reaching half-way down their legs, were busy washing in the stream and spreading clothes to dry on the smooth sward by the river's banks, chattering and screaming like so many parrots. Here and there an upright though graceful form, with swelling breast and tapering neck, might be seen filling a water-jar of red, porous earth, and then carrying it away on her head with the light step of a gazelle, yet balancing the jar so evenly without the assistance of a hand that not one drop of water could be seen to trickle over the sides. Potbellied urchins, of both sexes, of all sizes, hues, and ages, were

running about entirely naked, dipping and splashing in the little pools like so many young ducks. A smooth and level piece of turf lay between the river and the houses; these, some white, some red, were mingled with umbrageous mangrove and sandbox-trees, and here and there a cocoa-nut tree or stately palm stood towering above them in bold relief.

The valley of the river was full of shadow. Now and then a straggling ray of the early sun would gild the shrubs on some lofty peak, while an arch of amber-coloured light seemed to rise over the far distant mountain that stands in majesty at the head of the valley, and from whose bosom the bright stream leaps forth, forming a silvery arch. The sides of the Morne appeared one dense mass of foliage of different hues—brown, violet, green, yellow, saffron—blending one into the other, confused yet lovely.

There was life and sound, freshness and variety, beauty and grandeur in the scene

Yet, had our hero known it better, he would have shuddered, and perhaps have thought how like the hours of his first, fond, hopeful, passionate love—beautiful, oh, how beautiful to his youthful fancy, but undermining, poisoning all his after-years. Yes, in the breath of this lovely valley no white man can live, a subtle, sure, and deadly venom lurks beneath its gorgeousness. It is the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Arthur had dismounted, and was leaning against his horse, contemplating the scene before him with singular feelings. A year ago, he had stood amidst the stately oaks of green old England, rich in everything—in youth, in health, in possessions, in love, in honour. Now he was an exile, his name dishonoured, in comparative poverty, jilted, rejected, scorned; nought but his youth remained, and the freshness of that had passed; the whirlwind of passion had swept over it, and left desolation and melancholy where cheerfulness and hope

had flourished. Again, in the bitterness of his heart, he had said all women are jilts, coquettes, things to be bought and sold. At all times, and in all places, the last painful interview with Edith would obtrude itself. There it was, whirling about his brain, dimming his faculties, stinging his heart, always present night and day. During a fearful storm in the dreaded bay, it had haunted him; it had crossed him when watching the shark from the deck of the transport; at the mess-table, when hilarity and merriment were around him, he heard her last words; even on parade they would flash across suddenly, quickly; and now, amidst the noisy laughter, the screams of the negroes, and the murmur of the waters, the voice fell on his ear like the doom of the felon, and he drooped his head as if to conceal the ineffable melancholy that rested on his handsome countenance.

“*Il rêve de sa maîtresse,*” said a sweet female voice, and at the same time the light

stroke of a whip fell gently on Conway's shoulder.

Arthur started, looked up, and blushed when he saw the lovely Rosalie sitting gracefully on her horse close beside him, laughing with her lips and with her eyes. He saluted her cautiously, but gravely, and looked round as if expecting some one else.

"Oh! she will be here directly," said Rosalie, archly: "her horse cast a shoe in the deep sand; and I rode on alone, for fear you gentlemen should become impatient."

"You are bold, Mademoiselle, to ride by yourself in these times."

"There is nothing to be afraid of, Captain Conway: I have done so for two years, and have never been insulted — except, indeed, once," added Rosalie, recollecting herself and laughing merrily: "and that happened a few days ago, when a tall mulatto, who was a little tipsy, said I was a very pretty girl, and he wished he had

me for a wife. Don't tell my cousin François of this, it might make him jealous ;—but where is he ?”

“ Yonder he comes, galloping like mad.”

The young Frenchman appeared on horse-back, stretching out at full speed along the turf, and, plunging into the river at the ford, he sent the water splashing, the stones flying, and the women and children screaming like monkeys to the right and left, calling him by all the opprobrious names they could think of in their fright (negroes, and negro women especially, are dreadfully afraid of a horse in quick action), and in a minute he had embraced his cousin, and shaken hands cordially with our hero.

He had found means to seal his note, and had given it to old Auguste Pierrot, who had promised faithfully to leave it at the Morne. His mind was therefore set at ease, and he had quite forgotten his jealousy.

Presently, Marguerite—the winning Marguerite, in the bloom of freshness and beauty,

cantered up, followed by a mule, whose long slinging trot enabled it to keep pace with her horse. This mule had panniers slung across its back, and alongside it ran an active young negro slave.

What Arthur's feelings were when he took her little hand as she held it out to him, who shall say?

Rosalie inquired of her cousin where his sailor friend was? not that she wished his presence at all, for that would have spoiled the little *partie carrée*, and she had made up her mind that Arthur and Marguerite should fall in love with one another; but from curiosity. François replied, that the Captain had commissioned him to make his excuses to the ladies, as he was very stiff and tired from his ride of yesterday, and he had business of importance to attend to; but he took an opportunity to whisper in Arthur's ear the real cause of his absence. They were now ready to start; but, before they set their horses in motion,

François waved his hand in the manner of one about to make a speech, and said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I do not wish to alarm you; but, before we set out, I have to inform you that an Obeah man warned me this morning that something extraordinary would occur to-day. He took me down to the beach, and pointed with his lean withered hand to a deep purple haze hanging over the horizon, very unusual at this time of year. The old man shook like a patient in an ague-fit, and declared that he could hear strange sounds in the air, and that he had seen strange forms rising from the Souffrière. A fisherman who stood by, also declared that he had observed the shoals of mullet, and other small fish, rushing about in an unaccountable manner, as there were no bonitoes or albicores chasing them. Now, what think you of these strange signs and portents?"

"It shall not spoil our ride," said Rosalie, tossing back her veil. "*Allons, en avant, messieurs et mesdames*; come, François, you shall be my *cavalier servente* to-day. Captain Con-

way shall attend on Marguerite : it is my will and pleasure."

So saying, the lovely creole gave her horse a touch with the whip, and started off, leaving the others to follow as best they might.

Marguerite and Arthur all this time had not spoken beyond the mere good morrow, and they rode on side by side for some distance without exchanging a word.

At length, Arthur mustered up courage to break the ice, and said : "Do you think anything extraordinary will happen to-day, Miss Gordon?"

What Marguerite was thinking of at the moment, we do not know ; but certain it is that she blushed crimson at this question, and paused ere she replied ; when she did speak, her voice, soft, musical, and plaintive, fell on Arthur's ear like the song of the siren :

"These old negroes pretend to a kind of second sight, like our Scotch seers ; you will laugh at me, I fear, Captain Conway, when I confess that I do not altogether disbelieve in them."

“ I never laugh, Miss Gordon, at what I do not understand, whatever I may think of it,” replied Arthur, gravely.

“ Do not, I pray you, call me Miss Gordon ; it sounds so strange and formal : my name is Marguerite, and I know no other.” This was said so simply, and with so much earnestness, and so evidently without any spice of coquetry, that Arthur, though he smiled, felt he could not take it as a compliment paid to him particularly.

“ You think, then, that some attention ought to be paid to this old man’s warning, Miss Margaret ?”

“ There again, Miss Margaret ; why not Marguerite—plain Marguerite.”

She is a coquetish flirt, thought Arthur for a moment, and the dark cloud gathered over his brain ; but he looked at her, and it as quickly dissipated. As he did so, their eyes met for the first time, and Marguerite felt that a bright ray of light, like a spark of electricity,

darted through the space between them, and entering the portals of her eyes, it caused the warm blood to rush wildly through her veins.

“You have not answered my question, Marguerite,” said Conway, in a softer tone.

“I do not know what to say. This is not the season of the year for any of those awful convulsions of nature, which rend and torment these beautiful islands. No ; he probably alluded to some frightful or extraordinary occurrence among mankind. Oh ! when will these cruel wars come to an end—when will men cease to be savages !”

“You forget, Marguerite, that I too am a soldier—one of these savages,” said Arthur, laughing.

“Pardon me, Captain Conway ; young as I am, I have seen many awful sights, and I shudder at the thought of more bloodshed ; but you fight for a just and righteous cause, which must and will triumph in the end, for God is with you. Woman as I am, I feel that

I could throw off all that belongs to my sex, and strike a blow on your side ; yes, and even die, if by my death a single advantage could be gained. And yet, alas ! weak woman can only weep for you—pray for you ; but, believe me, if you suffer, so do we. Your bodies and our hearts bleed alike.”

Conway looked at the fair young girl with increasing interest. The energy with which she spoke—the transition from the soft delicate girl to the heroic woman, astonished and delighted him. Her character seemed so simple, so natural, so devoid of all art, that he resolved to study it further. He did not then think of the probable, not to say inevitable, consequences. His senses were attracted, and how could he reflect while resting beside her, with her eyes sparkling with emotion ; the bright fresh bloom on her lips and cheeks ; her golden clustering ringlets waving in the breeze ; her supple and well-rounded form, displayed to advantage by the habit, bending

gracefully with each movement of her horse. He felt that he was gazing on her with unconcealed admiration, and with far greater earnestness than cold politeness warranted. But Marguerite did not turn her head away, although her heightened colour betrayed what was passing in her heart—that fluttering, palpitating heart, which now for the first time had suffered itself to be surprised, and only waited for an opportunity of surrendering itself up to the conqueror. And did Marguerite know this? There are some who doubt love at first sight. Alas for poor Marguerite! She had but seen him, and the snare was around her.

“Yes,” said Arthur, resuming the conversation, which had come to a sudden pause; “the courage and devotedness of women far surpass what is called bravery in man. You are very courageous, are you not, Marguerite?”

“I have often been alarmed and terrified, but I do not think I was ever really frightened. Last autumn we had a terrific storm, almost

amounting to a hurricane, and, although I felt the deepest awe, I did not feel afraid."

"I have heard that feeling well described in a few lines," said Arthur; "but it was of a strong man, not of a tender girl like you, Marguerite. Shall I repeat them?"

"Oh! do. I love poetry above all things."

"They are supposed to describe the effect of the approach of a fierce hurricane on the captain of a ship:

"The Master on the leeward gangway stood,
Watching the heavens in their threat'ning mood.
Sudden I saw a quiv'ring pallor spread
O'er his dark face, the paleness of the dead
It was not fear, but that mysterious awe,
Which oft rebels against the senses' law,
When nature, clothed in her wildest robe,
Sends forth her terrors o'er the startled globe;
The brave in awe and silence must await,
Then do their best—the rest they leave to fate."

"They are your own; confess it, Captain

Conway," said Marguerite, gaily. "Ah! you need not; that conscious look speaks for itself. An officer writing poetry! Well, the lines are not bad to have been written by a red-coat."

"I must plead guilty, Marguerite; but why should not an officer write verses? Many a dismal solitary hour may be wiled away by giving loose to the imagination, and reducing the ideas into some tangible shape."

"Then why not give them to the world?"

"Ah! Marguerite; many a pretty stanza may be written that will not suit the eye of the public, or bear the critic's lash. The writer may be sensitive, or conscious of inferiority and imperfections. A hundred things keep him back; above all, the fear of ridicule."

"Will you think it a strange request if I ask you to let me see some of your poetry? I shall not be a severe critic."

"I have never shown it; but, if you take sufficient interest in me, Marguerite, to read

any crude effusions of mine, I shall only be too happy to produce them."

Marguerite looked at him earnestly, as if to read what was passing in his mind when he paid her this compliment. It was the nearest approach he had yet made to any expression of interest in her, and it made her nervous and anxious. She felt faint and sick at heart, and quite unable to continue the conversation ; and yet she could not have told why ; so, to veil her confusion, she proposed that they should quicken their pace, and try to overtake Rosalie and her cousin. Arthur readily consented, though his feelings were wavering ; and they rode on for some distance in silence.

They were not, however, aware that a man, apparently bent with age, and mounted on a mule, had been closely following them for some miles. At a crossing of the river, where they stopped for a few moments, to let their horses drink of the cool water, this man passed them ;

and, in reply to Arthur's frank good-morrow, he bowed, but did not speak. The young officer did not observe the bitter sneer that curled his lip as he looked at Marguerite; but supposed him to be some surly overseer belonging to a sugar-mill they had passed in the valley. Shortly afterwards, they overtook him in a narrow part of the path, where it overhung the stream; and the old man drew up his mule close to the face of the cliff to suffer them to go by. As Arthur passed, the man turned his head away; but looked fixedly at Marguerite, as if to impress her features in his memory.

By some sudden and hidden impulse, they checked again their horses' speed; and, as they rode on side by side at a foot's pace, the plot was thickening fast. Minute by minute Arthur was losing his self-possession; there wanted but some little accident to hasten the catastrophe—minute by minute the mist of simplicity and childishness that had obscured the

real feelings of Marguerite's romantic heart, was dissipating before the warm rays of love; yet nothing had passed between them but the simple interchange of a few sentences, in which the word or idea of love had never intruded. But was there nothing in that balmy sky—that lovely scenery—the contiguity—the opportunity—that assisted in increasing the tenderness and timidity of their glances, and the softness of their voices when they again spoke. Who can tell that there and then words might not have been spoken, words that can never be recalled, had not Marguerite asked a question, which in a moment sent the dark cloud whirling round Arthur's brain? Yet the words were spoken artlessly, involuntarily; but they had scarcely issued from her lips, before Marguerite repented that she had uttered them. She had eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge suddenly, irrevocably.

Marguerite's unfortunate question was simply

this: "Has love never formed the subject of your poetry?" To her surprise, the young officer did not reply; but, turning his head away, as if he had not heard her speak, he muttered something about being a long way behind, and almost rudely started off in a canter. Marguerite saw that she had offended him by her question. How had she done so? Could he have already loved? Did he still love some fair young girl in England? Alas! her reason guessed the truth, though her heart denied it instantly. Should she shun him as an enemy to her peace of mind—her happiness—nay—her life? Too late—it was all too late now. Oh! no; he was only angry with her curiosity; or perhaps he had not really heard, or had mistaken what she said. She was so glad they were travelling quickly; the ride would soon be over. The presence of others would relieve her embarrassment, and she would take care to be no more left alone with him. She

was confused, and could not conceal it; but whether Arthur perceived it, she could not tell, for he rode on moodily and in silence. At length, a diverging of the narrow track forced him to recollect himself, and to speak; and, to say the truth, he appeared as if waking from some terrible dream. Again he became conscious of the presence of the winning Marguerite, and of his own rudeness; and he turned to her with a sweet, melancholy smile on his lips, and said, in those soft, musical tones which fall so sweetly on a maiden's ear: "Forgive me, dear Marguerite, for my unintentional rudeness. I was thinking of my mother and her sad history. She would have loved you, Marguerite."

And this was true. The dark cloud brought with it not only the happy hours at Morley, and their dismal result, but also his mother's image; her death; and the blemish he had allowed to rest on her good name.

The track led across the river, and along a difficult and narrow path, where only one horse could travel at a time ; with a perpendicular cliff above, and the now wilder stream some twenty feet below, rushing through a sombre and narrow gorge, full of sharp bends and curious twists. This path conducted them to the head of the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

The spot that Rosalie had chosen for the repast was singularly wild and picturesque.

Mountains, cliffs, and rocks formed an irregular amphitheatre of gigantic proportions, near the centre of which, was a deep pool of transparent water. On its bosom, floated numerous and beautiful aquatic plants, and here and there a painted teal might be seen sailing or diving amongst them, or settling and smoothing his ruffled plumage in perfect unconcern.

From the bosom of the lofty mountain, over

a ledge full one hundred and fifty feet high, leapt the silver stream in one unbroken fall till, meeting with the rocks it threw up a veil of spray and foam, which the sun, now shining partially up the valley, tinged with rainbow-tinted dyes; and high above, where it issued from the mountain's breast, a slender spray bow formed an arch of prismatic colours over the thread of silver. Then, tumbling over the broken ledges in a series of little cascades, it fell, with a loud, murmuring sound, into the silent pool. Issuing from thence, it wound through the deep precipitous shadowy gully before-mentioned.

In every spot, where any soil had lodged, the vegetation was wonderful. A clump of feathery, graceful bamboos fringed one edge of the pool. A single, aged mangrove-tree, with wild, twisting, drooping branches, stood alone on a small piece of soft grass carpeted with lilies of lovely hues, white, bronze, and the deepest purple; and

under the grateful shade of this grim old tree, the cloth was spread for their repast.

On the far side of the stream, the scathed and withered trunk of a huge bullet-tree, throwing its broken and fantastic arms into the air, gave to the scene an air of melancholy and decay. Two or three dismal Johnny-crows, attracted probably by the scent of the provender, flew screaming by, and perched on the old withered tree, undismayed at the presence of a noble eagle that hovered, with fanning wings, high overhead in the clear atmosphere. Here Rosalie and her cousin were already seated with everything prepared, and a bunch of fragrant fern leaves was spread ready for Marguerite.

Arthur sprang eagerly off his horse to assist Marguerite to alight, but she was on the ground before him. Poor Marguerite, she would not then for worlds have touched his hand.

Rosalie, who knew what love was, with the instinctive quickness of woman, perceived, by her manner, that something had happened. So while Arthur and the young Frenchman were loosening the horses' girths and picketing them near the pool, she threw her arms round the fair girl's neck, and kissing her tenderly, whispered kindly: "Something has distressed you, dear Maggie, tell me quickly what it is."

"Oh! there is indeed nothing, dear Rosalie," replied Marguerite, though her looks belied her words.

"Yes, yes, darling, your tell-tale cheeks betray you; he has been whispering strange-sounding words in your ear—wicked man, to frighten poor Marguerite so."

"Oh! no, no, he is too gentle and considerate for that; but I—" here Marguerite looked wildly round, and let her head fall on Rosalie's bosom. "I—I love him—and I cannot hide it. Oh! what will he think of me, Rosalie?"

“If he has one spark of feeling, dearest, he will love you as you love him.”

“Oh! I fear—I fear—it is too sudden, it bodes good to neither of us. I did not know it, dear, dear Rosalie, or I would not have come to-day.”

“Foolish little thing, you could not have stayed away,” said the lively creole, patting her downy cheek; “but hush, compose yourself, for here he comes.”

They formed a charming little party, those four, in the bloom of youth and beauty, seated on the lily-decked ground round the snow-white cloth. Rosalie, with ready tact, entered into a lively conversation with our hero, to the great relief of Marguerite, though François began to rally her a little about her lingering behind; but a look from Rosalie stopped him, and he amused her with Parisian gossip and anecdotes, at which Marguerite could not help laughing. To a casual observer, they would have seemed the gayest of the gay; but there was not a

single heart there that did not beat with some strange emotion, the nature of which the kind reader may well understand.

They had finished their repast, but were still seated on the soft grass, as if unwilling to quit so sweet a spot.

"Look," said Marguerite, suddenly; "surely yon distant hill is bending towards us."

Scarcely had she spoken, when a rattling, frightful noise, like thousands of hammers striking on iron forges, yet moving rapidly onwards, and fast increasing in loudness and intensity, deafened their ears.

Mountains bowed their heads, the hills staggered and reeled to and fro like drunken men. The earth shook and rocked beneath their feet.

For a few seconds the party sat gazing on one another, pale, helpless, sick, trembling, awe-struck.

"It is the end of the world. God's will be done," murmured Marguerite.

"Quick!" cried the Frenchman, leaping up

suddenly and catching Rosalie by the hand, "we shall be safer under yon overhanging cliff than here ; true, it may fall and crush us," he muttered, "if the world is at an end, but the detached pieces will not strike us there—quick—quick !"

Arthur caught Marguerite up in his arms, and rushed to the spot indicated by the Frenchman.

The shock increased in intensity, the noise became more deafening, the earth trembled so convulsively that they staggered on their feet, and Marguerite, instinctively, caught hold of Arthur's arm to save herself from falling ; he clasped her to his bosom. Scarcely had they reached the shelter of the cliff, when a huge fragment of rock, of several tons' weight, detached from the hill-top, came thundering down, tearing and rending the shrubs and trees, leaving a track as if blasted with fire, and sending other pieces of rock flying right and left in its headlong career ; then, crashing

through the mangrove-tree, strewing and scattering its branches in every direction, and snapping the thick trunk like a dried reed-stalk, it bounded into the pool, dividing the waters and throwing up high into the air a sheet of foam that fell like a shower of rain even where they stood.

Rock after rock showered down, the thunder of their fall mingling in fearful melody with the rattling hammering noise of the mighty power. A cloud of dust arose in the valley, and for a moment, obscured the bright blue sky.

Presently, the water in the pool receded from its edges as if the earth was drinking it up, then back again it rushed, bubbling, foaming and hissing; and, in a moment, it flooded the lily-spangled grass plot, and washed up even to the foot of the overhanging cliff: again, for a moment, it receded, and again the water came back deeper than before. The vibrations lessened in force, they ceased, the shock had passed away.

An awful stillness succeeded the fearful noise, and the murmur of the water sounded loudly amidst the silence of the desolate scene. Hush, they could hear each other's heart palpitate, and the breath as it came with a deep sigh from their labouring bosoms. Those few brief seconds had seemed to them ages. They looked at one another like sleepers suddenly awakened. Safe, safe, all safe : but where was the negro boy, and where the horses ? the former with his mule were buried beneath the wreck of the mangrove-tree, crushed, mutilated, disfigured. The horses still stood where they were picketed, though nearly up to their girths in water trembling, sweating, snorting.

Marguerite, as soon as her confused senses returned, released herself gently, with a burning blush on her cheeks, from Arthur's arms ; but not before he had whispered a few words in her ear : " You are not angry with me, dear Marguerite ? there was no time to reflect."

" It is I," murmured she in reply, " who

ought to ask forgiveness ; but oh ! it was very awful."

"I shall never forget those few moments, if you will allow me to remember them."

"Oh ! do not ask me anything now—it is cruel : our dangers are not over yet."

The young officer looked round, and perceived this to be true. The earthquake had passed away, but not its consequences—the water was still rising.

The young men assisted the two still trembling maidens to climb on a rock, out of reach of the water, whilst they determined what was to be done.

"Some huge rock must have fallen into the narrow gully, and dammed the water up," whispered Arthur to the young Frenchman.

"It must be so," replied François ; "we must contrive to loose the horses, and get away from this as quickly as possible. Yet, I do not think there is any danger from the water, or

the horses would have broken away instinctively."

"They are too terrified to move, I fear, and that is all. But come; a little wet will not hurt us."

The two young men waded into the water to release the horses.

As they passed the wreck of the mangrove-tree, they discovered the corpse of the negro boy floating about, the wash of the water having disengaged it from the fallen mass. It presented a frightful spectacle, the skull being beaten into pieces, and the spine protruding through the skin.

"We must not let the ladies see or know this, Captain Conway," said the Frenchman; "it would shock them too much."

"I doubt whether they have even thought of him as yet; their senses were too startled and bewildered by the shock. I judge by myself, for I must confess that I should never have

missed him. We must send some men out to give the poor fellow a decent burial."

"Ay," muttered the Frenchman, "if the water recedes, a pretty corpse they will find. The sun, the ants, and the land crabs will have picked him pretty clean before they come; but, never mind: he knows no better, and it will set his mind at ease. Aha! I see now why the Johnny-crows were here. It is well they have no other pickings. Come, Captain Conway, we must think of ourselves, and—may I venture to say—of our mistresses; and leave this poor carrion to the mercies of the Johnny-crows. He is past our help."

There was a certain degree of levity about these words that grated rather harshly on Arthur's senses, although he felt them to be true. He did not, however, reply; but proceeded at once to release the horses. This, indeed, was no easy task, as the water was more than half way up their legs; and some time elapsed before they could accomplish it.

“You were right,” said Arthur suddenly, as they turned round towards the mangrove-tree ; “there is no danger from the water : see, it is subsiding rapidly. Had we waited a little longer, we might have gone dry-shod.”

True, the water was fast receding—almost rushing from the part it had flooded ; and, by the time they reached the tree, the grass was bare, leaving the body of the negro lying exposed to the rays of the scorching sun ; and two or three Johnny-crows had settled just above it, on the stump of the mangrove-tree.

“Something has given way below, under the pressure of the water, Captain,” said the Frenchman, in a hoarse whisper ; “if it is the path by the narrow gorge, we shall not be able to pass it without help.”

“Possibly one of us could indeed, one of us must do it,” replied Arthur. “We cannot leave tender women exposed to the scorching sun. They have gone through enough already.”

“The sooner we get away from this the better, for it will not be long before they become aware of the presence of a corpse ; fortunately, the wreck of the tree is between them, and they cannot see it.”

Rosalie had been more frightened during the awful spectacle than her companion, but the latter was terribly agitated and nervous—more from the effect of Arthur’s words than in consequence of the earthquake.

Did he love her then ? Her very soul had drunk in his words. Half intoxicated with joy and wild delirious hope, she could not speak ; but a smile wreathed around her parted lips, and a look, at once expressive, tender, and conscious, beamed in her eyes, giving to her countenance, just now so pale and awe-struck, an expression so nearly beatific, that Rosalie, although she divined the cause, and longed to question her, forbore to interrupt that momentary rapture.

The young men, leading the horses to the

rock on which the two fair girls stood, assisted them to mount. This time Marguerite did not refuse Arthur's help. She trembled so much, that she could not have got on her horse without it. Our hero noticed it, but thought, naturally enough, that it was the effect of the earthquake.

Not until they were all mounted, and ready to leave the now desolated spot, did Rosalie notice the absence of the young slave, and she asked her cousin where he was ; to which François replied gravely :

“Do not ask me, dear Rosalie : let us leave this at once.”

“Oh ! *Mon Dieu !* he is killed then ; and this is all my fault. I insisted upon this ride, and see the end of it. François ; this is very dreadful.”

“The end has not yet come,” murmured the Frenchman, turning his head away. Low as he spoke, Rosalie's quick ear caught what he said, and she turned upon him a look of inquiry ; but

he heeded her not, saying only : " Let us leave this."

The cavalcade set out on their return, Arthur leading the way, Marguerite next, then Rosalie, and, last of all, her cousin.

What they encountered on their way back to La Belle Etoile must be reserved to another chapter.

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